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DIT
Belfield

THE

POLITICAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

CORRESPONDENCE

OF

LEWIS THE SIXTEENTH;

WITH

OBSERVATIONS ON EACH LETTER.

BY HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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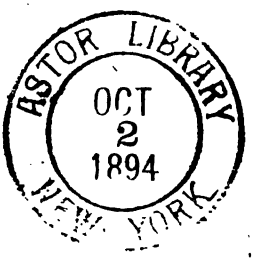

T. Davison,
White-Friars.

PREFACE.

AMIDST the ſtruggles of contending parties, and the fury of hoſtile paſſions to which great public events give birth, there is no taſk more difficult than to obſerve with calmneſs, and appreciate with impartiality, the actors in thoſe memorable ſcenes. Were it poſſible to lay down any common principle to which we might bring back thoſe heated opponents, to fix ſome ſure baſis on which we might build a ſtructure of reaſoning, to agree on ſome general axiom from which we might draw indiſputable concluſions, the difficulties would be conſiderably ſoftened; and hope might be entertained, that,

by patient inveſtigation and good faith, we might arrive at length, if not to perfect ſimilarity of ſentiment, at leaſt to that tolerant ſtate of mind which permits us to view, without rancour, opinions that do not accord with our own.

Whether we have yet reached that happy period, I ſhall not pretend to determine; nor can we decide if the preſent phaſis of the French revolution be that in which thoſe who call themſelves the friends of Lewis the Sixteenth act wiſely in evoking the ſhade of this unfortunate prince. The motives, which have led them to make this appeal to the public, are conſigned in the preface to the intended French edition of theſe letters. We cite the words of the editors themſelves.

" Many reſpectable writers have at-
" tempted to reconcile the memory of

" this good king with the eſteem of his
" contemporaries, which he never de-
" ſerved to have loſt. Their works have
" been read with avidity, and the pages
" have been bathed with the tears of re-
" gret. But it never yet entered into the
" mind of any perſon to paint the unfor-
" tunate monarch by his moſt ſecret
" thoughts, by extracts from his manu-
" ſcripts, by his analyſes, by his public
" and private correſpondence. This,
" however, is the ſureſt way of appreci-
" ating him, to behold him, not in his
" court, amidſt his courtiers, with that
" kind of borrowed ſoul which the habit
" of commanding gave him, but in the
" preſence of his intimate friends, of na-
" ture, and of his own conſcience. It is
" by this mode of trial that we diſcover
" the man without reproach, and that we
" ſometimes feel diſguſt at the great
" man. The end which it was intended

" to promote by the publication of theſe
" letters, was to ſcatter a few flowers
" over the tomb of a prince, the friend of
" mankind, whoſe apotheoſis will ſurely
" be one day made by future gene-
" rations."

The ſureſt way of appreciating characters, as the Editors have obſerved, is by viewing them ſtript of that borrowed kind of ſoul which the circumſtances in which they are placed lead men to aſſume. How often, when we read antient hiſtory, do we feel a reſtleſs deſire to know ſomething of the domeſtic ſituation, the undiſguiſed feelings, of celebrated perſonages. We ſee them like diſtant ſtars, lighting up the darkneſs which covers remote times, and wiſh for a mental teleſcope capable of piercing the gloom of ages, through which their beams paſs before they reach us.

Whatever opinions may be formed of the motives of the French editors for the publication of this correſpondence, it ſeems doubtful if the end they had in view will be attained. We live in an age, it has been obſerved, when every thing is diſcuſſed; and the firſt impreſſions which we have received reſpecting any object, are often effaced, when we have examined it more cloſely. At the opening of the French revolution Lewis the Sixteenth was conſidered, by the friends of liberty, as an hoſtile power. In the progreſs of this revolution, he made repeated and ſolemn profeſſions of his adherence to the principles it had eſtabliſhed, and the reforms which had taken place. He accepted the title of Reſtorer of French Liberty, and bound himſelf by the moſt ſacred obligations to maintain and execute the conſtitutional laws. In reading this correſpondence, which, ac-

cording to its intended Editors, is to place him in the preſence of his intimate friends, of nature, and his own conſcience, we may be led to ſuſpect either that we have hitherto miſtaken the meaning of theſe terms, or that conſcience is a more accommodating principle with the rulers of nations than with other men; and whatever diſpoſition we may have to ſtrew flowers over the tomb of the unfortunate, we may be allowed to doubt whether any generation, even the remoteſt, will raiſe Lewis the Sixteenth to the honors of an apotheoſis.

Nor let this opinion be deemed raſh or ſevere. If time may be meaſured by the ſucceſſion of ideas, we have lived centuries of the common flight of years ſince the reign of Lewis the Sixteenth: we may therefore be permitted to conſider ourſelves as a ſort of poſterity with reſpect

to him, and be allowed to be capable of judging him with the calm impartiality which, in the ordinary courſe of human affairs, is the birthright of ſucceeding generations. But independently of this conſideration, whatever may be the perſonal feelings or opinions of a writer with reſpect to political characters or events, he ſurely, when he preſumes to ſeiſe the pen of hiſtory, cannot loſe ſight of the dignity of his occupation, or forget (to uſe the words of Johnſon) "that he is charged with a certain portion of truth."

When we firſt unroll the mighty canvas of the revolution, the moſt prominent figure is Lewis the Sixteenth. At its opening ſcene, when we behold him in poſſeſſion of abſolute power, and ſhrinking from parting with a ſmall portion where ſo much was left, the generous mind naturally places itſelf on the ſide of the oppreſſed multitude, and conſiders

that every weapon wreſted from deſpotiſm was a trophy gained to juſtice. But when, in the progreſs of the drama, we contemplate him, who was once the maſter of a powerful empire, bending a victim beneath the tempeſt of popular fury; when we reflect on the gloomy cloſe of the tragedy; when we follow him from his throne to a priſon, and from the priſon to the ſcaffold; when we witneſs his ſufferings and his reſignation, his meekneſs, and his wrongs; when we compare his character and his deſtiny, and balance his faults and his puniſhment, we ſee him placed in a point of view in which every ſympathy of our nature pleads in his behalf; and we lament that his country was not ſpared the offence of his death.

In examining the records which treat more particularly of the hiſtory of Lewis the Sixteenth, we muſt guard againſt the

ſlaviſh panegyriſt, who views in him no error but that of relaxing the ſlighteſt rein of authority, and the intemperate demagogue, who, conſidering the kingly office as a crime, deems the puniſhment of the holder an indiſpenſable expiation. With thoſe extremes truth holds no aſſociation. From thoſe political rhapſodies the impartial enquirer turns with diſguſt: he ſees paſſion deforming every page, the calumniator uſurping the pen of the hiſtorian, and finds the pleadings of an advocate, inſtead of the deciſions of a judge.

But if it may hitherto have been difficult to form a juſt eſtimate of the real character of Lewis the Sixteenth from the disfigured documents which have been laid before us, the intended editors of the preſent correſpondence aſſert, that we have here the moſt ſure and moſt indiſputable means of arriving at truth. The

evidence they preſent is the moſt infallible and perſuaſive: it is the confeſſion of the monarch himſelf, the expreſſion of his inmoſt ſentiments, the tranſcription of his moſt ſecret thoughts, the unfoldings of his mind with kindred affections, the transfuſion of his conſcience into the boſom of friendſhip, in which reſerve would have been folly, and prevarication without a motive.

It muſt be admitted that this kind of evidence is the leaſt liable to challenge from any quarter, when the only queſtion to be decided is the real opinion of the party, without any reference to the propriety or impropriety of holding ſuch opinion. This is a ſeparate queſtion, of which every one will judge according to the opinions or prejudices he may have previouſly formed. The advocates of the king, in the confidence of victory, exult

at the univerſal ſuffrage they have obtained. "This collection," ſay they, "is a monument erected to the glory of Lewis the Sixteenth, and which muſt appear more worthy of eternal duration than thoſe magnificent mauſoleums raiſed with ſplendid extravagance, than thoſe ſtatues of marble and bronze, which time ſilently impairs, or which great cataſtrophes overturn and deſtroy." Whatever be the duration of this monument, ſome doubts, when we have examined it with attention, may remain, whether the conſent of the preſent generation or poſterity will ratify this fond prediction with reſpect to its glory.

It was the intention of the king's friends to have publiſhed thoſe papers in two volumes. The firſt contained ſimply his letters, and were deſtined "à nous montrer Louis XVI homme privé," to

preſent the private character of the king. The ſecond volume contained all that could portray him "comme homme public," as a public character; and conſiſted of his diſcourſes, memorials, obſervations, writings, the analyſis of a few of his works; "all which objects, united, were to preſent us the laſt king of France, as a prince really enlightened, made to govern men in the ſolitude of the cabinet, fitted to become the counſellor of a king, worthy of executing, capable of judging men, and tranſmitting his judgements to poſterity." This work was ſuppoſed by the editors to offer a "full juſtification to men who were prejudiced, to awaken in generous minds grateful recollections, to excite remorſe in the hearts of the king's perſecutors, to give uſeful inſtructions to ſtateſmen, and teach crowned heads that it is not ſufficient to poſſeſs the virtues of Trajan and Antoninus; that the cou-

rage of heroes, and the policy of great kings, are equally neceſſary, joined to the wiſdom of a Sully, and the firmneſs of a Richelieu."

The purpoſes of the intended French editors have been religiouſly obſerved with reſpect to the king's letters, and alſo with reſpect to ſuch of his other papers as have never yet appeared; but it ſeemed to me unneceſſary to ſwell theſe volumes with the maſs of papers that have been already publiſhed, and which are to be found in the journals of the times, and in moſt of the memoirs or annals of the French revolution. The chief merit which theſe papers poſſeſs in the eyes of the editors, is that they were written by Lewis the Sixteenth; and, as ſuch, contain the faithful expreſſion of his ſentiments. A very few of thoſe papers, which were but little known, I have pre-

ſerved: but the inſertion of the reſt appeared to me unneceſſary, for the reaſons already mentioned. The titles of the papers which are omitted will be mentioned in the table of contents.

The materials for this monument to the glory of Lewis the Sixteenth have been for ſome time prepared. The French editors ſtate that they have it in their power to enlarge this collection, but that a choice was neceſſary. We are therefore in poſſeſſion of thoſe which are moſt favorable to the cauſe which the friends of the late king are anxious to ſupport, deeming the evidence ſufficient to gain every ſuffrage in its favor.

It is unneceſſary to mention the reaſons which produced the delay of their publication, and ſtill leſs the means by which theſe manuſcript volumes fell into

my hands. The only important point to be aſcertained was that of their authenticity. The French editor, in the note which precedes his preface, ſtates that the originals are depoſited in the hands of a perſonage "who will think it a pleaſure and a duty to communicate them to ſuch as are curious or incredulous." This ſtatement is true. But, independent of this external proof, which is concluſive to thoſe who are acquainted with the handwriting of the king, ſuch meaſures have been taken, as appeared to me fully ſatisfactory, to arrive at the greateſt ſupplementary proof, by conſulting ſuch perſons as were moſt likely to be informed on the ſubject. The proofs which I have obtained from men who now fill eminent offices under the republic, and from others who exerciſed the higheſt functions under Lewis the Sixteenth, and who were conſequently inſtructed both as to

the ſpirit and the letter, leave no doubt whatever, with reſpect to the authenticity of thoſe papers. While they preſent the king alternately as a private and public man, by his correſpondence with individuals, and his diſcourſes to the national repreſentation and to ſections of the people, it appears ſingular that no ſuſpicions entered the minds of the French editors, that the public, who were called only to admire, would ſometimes pauſe to compare and to reaſon. The editors, it is true, in their preface, hazard certain animadverſions which wear the air of impartiality, and to which they would limit thoſe of the readers. "We dare, at preſent," they obſerve, "publiſh without fear in books, what is already in every heart; and declare, in the name of future generations, that Lewis the Sixteenth, on the throne of the Bourbons, had no other reproach to make himſelf in the difficult art of

governing, than that irresolution which neutralises every thing, that want of self-confidence which renders the monarch null, and that weakness which destroys."

These are, no doubt, blemishes in the princely character; and, if nothing further had been intended in this justification of Lewis the Sixteenth than the display of his private virtues, respect for his misfortunes would have left his faults unnoticed. But to defend the memory of Lewis the Sixteenth appears less the aim of his friends, than to calumniate the memory of those who have rendered themselves illustrious by rescuing their country from the ignoble servitude under which it was oppressed. This generous effort is stigmatised in the prefatory address as a "series of useless crimes, producing only useless disasters." The revolution, by changing all the elements of

ſocial order, is ſtated to have "cauſed the moſt enlightened nation of Europe to make a retrograde ſtep towards barbariſm," and, which is ſtill more diſaſtrous, "to have rendered indocile to the yoke the people whom the king's birth had condemned him to govern."

The defence of Lewis the Sixteenth is therefore no longer the point in conteſt, or at leaſt becomes only a point of ſecondary conſideration. His friends have ſhifted the ground on which they might have remained ſecure, and, by enlarging their means of defence, have left themſelves and the object of their idolatry open to attack. It is no longer the king they mean to defend; it is the revolution they are earneſt to criminate. Let them not be diſpleaſed, therefore, if, in the obſervations which have ſuggeſted themſelves on reading theſe letters, they ſome-

times diſcover an attempt to defend that barbariſm towards which the moſt enlightened country of Europe has made a retrograde ſtep.

And what period in the annals of mankind more calculated to awaken ſolemn, rapt attention, to ſeiſe every faculty of the ſoul, to call forth every feeling excited by the ſublime and the terrible, than the epocha of that revolution which, in its effects, will change the condition, and almoſt the deſtinies, of man? How long will poſt erity pauſe on the ſolemn page which marks its mighty records! In reading hiſtory, we paſs rapidly over the common flight of years and ages, like the traveller, who diligently purſues his way through a country which preſents only ordinary objects: but, when this aſtoniſhing æra unfolds itſelf to the intellectual view, the reader

will feel a ſenſation ſimilar to that of the ſame traveller, when, ſuddenly burſting on his ſight, he beholds ſcenes of overwhelming majeſty, and finds himſelf ſurrounded by images of nature, the beautiful, the ſublime, the terrific, the ſtupendous, which fill his mind with aſtoniſhment, or ſwell his boſom with enthuſiaſtic emotion.

Conſidering the French revolution as the moſt important event of modern hiſtory, every thing that tends to throw light on that momentous epocha has ſome portion of intereſt; and it is with this perſuaſion that I preſume to offer to the public the obſervations that accompany the ſubſequent letters. If I have not concealed my admiration of the great and exalted principles in favor of the human race which the revolution was deſtined to eſtabliſh, I hope alſo,

that, in commenting on the character and conduct of Lewis the Sixteenth, I ſhall not be accuſed of inſenſibility or injuſtice, while I have ſought nothing but truth. Some of the obſervations ſubjoined, trivial perhaps in themſelves, may derive value from their connexion with the mighty event of the revolution, in the ſame manner as an obſcure individual may be remembered, who carves his name upon an immortal monument which mocks the deſtruction of time.

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CORRESPONDENCE

OF

LEWIS XVI.

LETTRE I.

A M. DE VERGENNES.

17 Octobre, 1774.

J'AI lu, Monsieur, la dépêche secrète et très importante de M. le chevalier de St. Priest. Je n'ignore pas les services du sieur Thugut; mais je n'en connais pas les détails. Je tiendrai les paroles que le feu roi lui avait données. Mais la manière ne peut s'exécuter lorsqu'il sera en France, comme M. de St. Priest le propose. Quel inconvénient y aurait-il à le laisser à Vienne? Je sais bien qu'il y répugne; mais je crois être sûr qu'on n'a à Vienne aucune notice de lui. Quand il y sera arrivé, peut-être

ne le remployerait-on pas dans la politique; mais alors il pourra voyager, et venir s'établir en France, où il sera tranquille: et comme d'ailleurs je ne le crois pas Autrichien, ni même sujet de l'impératrice, cela lui sera aisé.

Je ne crois pas que M. de Kaunitz le tourmente sur ses négociations des déclarations moins fortes; si on le savait, il pourrait les rejetter sur la faute des drogmans, qui n'ont pas bien entendu ce qu'il voulait dire. Il n'y a nulle bonne raison à donner pour son retour par la mer. Quand il sera arrivé en France, si la reine demande une place pour lui, n'étant pas du secret, elle ne pourra pas donner des raisons à l'impératrice, surtout pour l'empêcher de retourner à Vienne, plutôt que de se fixer en France: et par là l'on verra que c'est le cabinet qui le pousse; et s'il y eût jamais eu des soupçons contre lui, ils se renouvelleront. Le prince de Kaunitz comparera les ordres qu'il a donnés à la manière dont il les a exécutés. Je me souviens que M. D'Aiguillon, en me

rendant compte, me dit que le feu roi avait fait dire à l'internonce (M. de Thugut) que, si l'intrigue était découverte, il ne lui donnerait pas de retraite en France, mais une pension pour vivre où il pourrait. La trame découverte, le roi de Prusse ne manquerait pas de nous brouiller avec Vienne : et ce sera avec raison qu'il parlera des petites intrigues que la cour de France emploie, en montrant que nous n'avons pas agi de bonne foi avec elle : et dans ce moment, où la cour de Vienne veut s'approcher de nous, il est très important de ne pas lui donner des ombrages. Si on veut employer M. Thugut, il lui sera aisé, dans la persuasion où je suis qu'il n'est pas né sujet de l'impératrice, de demander son renvoi par raison de santé. Alors il pourra venir jouir en France du fruit de ses travaux ; et peut être même sera-t-il recommandé par la cour de Vienne. Voilà ce qui je pense sur lui, et pour ne pas nous compromettre,

Les lettres qui sont jointes ici, prouvent

la confiance qu'on a en lui, et qu'on ne le soupçonne de rien. L'année prochaine, où les affaires de la Pologne seront finies, les vues de la maison d'Autriche remplies, où il n'y aura nulle raison de revenir sur le passé, où les cours copartageantes seront en guerre entre elles,—Vienne, voulant cultiver notre amitié, ne cherchera pas à inquiéter quelqu'un qu'elle pourrait soupçonner nous être attaché. Vous pouvez lui faire dire que le baron de Bréteuil sera chargé de lui donner protection indirecte, et les moyens de s'évader en cas de soupçon.

La politique de M. de Kaunitz est une chose bien incompréhensible. Plus je la vois, moins je la comprends. Par les instructions de Thugut, il paraît qu'il le croit absolument lié avec la Russie, et qu'il n'a pas contribué au traité de paix : du moins l'a-t-il approuvé. De l'autre côté, il nous doit dire qu'il en craint fort les suites : et l'empereur s'étant expliqué avec l'abbé Georgel, il faut conclure de cela que sa politique est d'être bien avec tout le monde,

pour y trouver son intérêt particulier. Nous sommes liés avec lui par un bon traité: et s'il veut quelque chose de nous, il faut attendre qu'il s'explique, et que nous y voyions quelque chose d'avantageux; car il n y a rien à craindre de rester tranquille, surtout se méfiant des bons offices du roi de Prusse.

Pour M. le chevalier de St. Priest, il est absolument nécessaire qu'il reste dans ce pays là: il y est trop utile, pour le laisser revenir. Il faut que M. Gérard lui réponde amicalement sur cet article, comme il s'en explique avec lui, sans paraître vous avoir communiqué sa lettre; mais qu'il lui ôte toute idée de retour; qu'il lui dise qu'il a cru entrevoir, par ce qu'il vous a entendu dire précedemment, que ses services me sont très agréables, et que personne ne peut mieux servir l'état que lui dans de pareilles circonstances; et qu'il aura une récompense digne de ses services, quand il aura rempli le tems nécessaire. Pour vous, répétez lui que je suis, on ne

peut pas plus, content de ses services, et qu'il n'y a pas d'occasion plus belle de me servir; que c'est à lui à rassembler les débris d'un bâtiment prêt à tomber en ruine; que c'est à lui de le ressusciter de ses cendres; que vous sentez bien que sa charge est très pésante; mais qu'avec de l'esprit et du courage comme il en a, il y réussira beaucoup mieux que d'autres, et qu'il en aura toute la gloire. Vous entrerez après cela dans des détails sur notre commerce; vous lui marquerez que c'est de sa vigilance que dépend sa ruine, ou la certitude de revenir dans l'état le plus florissant où il ait jamais été, comme l'ouverture de la Mer Noire peut nous le prouver. Enfin vous le louerez de sa prévoyance à opposer le Catholicisme au rit Grec; et vous lui ajouterez qu'il ne pouvait rien faire qui me fût plus agréable, et que je l'exhorte à continuer.

LETTER I.

(Translation.)

TO M. DE VERGENNES.

October 17th, 1774.

I HAVE read, Sir, the secret and very important dispatches of M. le chevalier de St. Priest. I am not ignorant of the services of M. Thugut, though unacquainted with the details; and will certainly adhere to the engagements made by the late king. But this cannot be accomplished in the manner M. de St. Priest suggests, if M. Thugut should come to France. What inconvenience can result from leaving him at Vienna? I know his repugnance to remain: but I have reason to believe that no informations respecting him have reached that place. Perhaps, on his arrival, he may not be re-employed in political affairs; in which case he may travel, and come and establish himself in France,

where he will live in tranquillity: and this he may do the more easily, as I believe he is neither an Austrian, nor even a subject of the empress.

I do not think that M. de Kaunitz will persecute him on the subject of his negotiations respecting less important declarations: but, if this should be known, he can throw the fault upon the interpreters, who did not well comprehend what he meant to say. I perceive no good reason whatever, for his returning by sea: and if the queen, upon his arrival in France, asks a place for him, not being in the secret, she can allege no reason to the empress, why he should not return to Vienna rather than settle in France: it will therefore soon be perceived that the cabinet has pushed him on; and if ever any suspicions arose against him, they will be renewed. The prince of Kaunitz will compare the orders he gave with the manner in which they were executed. I recollect that M. D'Aiguillon, in giving me an account of this, told me that

the late king had made known to the internuncio (M. de Thugut) that, if the intrigue were discovered, he would not give him a retreat in France, but a pension with which he might live where he could. If the plot were known, the king of Prussia would not fail to embroil us with Vienna, and would have some reason to talk of the little intrigues which the court of France employs, by shewing that we have not acted towards Vienna with good faith: and at this moment, when that court wishes to connect itself more nearly with us, it becomes important to give it no umbrage. If the Austrian cabinet should wish to employ M. Thugut, it will be easy for him, (persuaded as I am that he was not born a subject of the empress,) to ask his dismission on account of health: he could then come and enjoy in France the fruits of his labours, and may perhaps even be recommended by the court of Vienna. This is all I can suggest for him, without committing ourselves.

The inclosed letters prove the degree of confidence placed in him, and that he is far from being suspected. Next year, when the affairs of Poland are finished, and the views of the house of Austria accomplished, when there will no longer be any reason to recur to the past, when the co-participating courts will be at war with each other, Vienna, desirous of cultivating our friendship, will avoid molesting a person whom that court may suspect of bearing us some attachment. You may inform him that the baron de Bréteuil has orders to afford him indirect protection, and the means of escape, if necessary.

The politics of M. de Kaunitz are quite incomprehensible; and the more I see of them, the less I understand. It appears from Thugut's instructions, that he believes him to be absolutely connected with Russia, and that he did not contribute to the treaty of peace, which, however, he has at least approved. On the other hand,

he seems to tell us, that he is apprehensive of the consequences: and, the emperor having had an explanation with the abbé Georgel, we must conclude from hence that his policy is to be well with all the world, as far as it serves his own particular interests. We are connected with him by a good treaty: and if he wishes to obtain any thing of us, we must wait till he explains himself, and till we perceive some advantage in what he proposes; for we have nothing to fear in remaining quiet, above all while we mistrust the good offices of the king of Prussia.

With respect to M. le chevalier de St. Priest, it is absolutely necessary that he should remain in that country: he is too useful, to be suffered to return. Since he has expressed this wish to M. Gérard, he must reply in a friendly manner, and without appearing to have communicated the letter to you, but in such terms as to leave him no idea of returning. Let M. Gérard observe to him, that, from what he has heard

you say, he is persuaded that his services are highly agreeable to me; that no man can be so useful to the state in such circumstances, as himself; and that, when he has fulfilled his task, he will meet with a recompense worthy of his labours. You will also not fail to repeat to him how much I am satisfied with his conduct, and that he will never find a more happy occasion of serving me—that it is left for him to prop up an edifice falling into ruins, and save it from mouldering into dust; that you know well how burdensome is the task he has to perform, but that, with talents and courage like his, he will succeed far better than others, and all the glory will be his own. You will then enter into details upon our commerce, and shew him that its ruin, or the certainty of its rising to a more flourishing state than ever, depends upon his vigilance; which the opening of the Black Sea may prove to us. Finally, you will applaud his care in opposing Catholicism to the Greek ritual, assuring him that he could do nothing more agreeable to me, and that I exhort him to persevere.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE 1st LETTER.

THIS, and the following letter, which were in the possession of the secret committee of the convention in 1792, have been already published; but having found them placed in the collection, and as they contain some curious matter, I thought that their republication would give an addional interest to the work.

Perhaps there is less subject of surprise at what has been called the treason of M. Thugut, than may at first view be imagined; nor can it be deemed extraordinary that a spy of monarchical France should be a chief counsellor in the late coalition against republican France. Ministers, like other men, are influenced by the strongest motives: and as self-interest has its due weight with those who figure at the head of governments, we need not wonder

that M. de Thugut should serve the Austrian cabinet with as much sincerity, if not with as much success, as he had heretofore served the French. That system of politics which has in this instance been called treason, and which an animated writer of our own country has stigmatised by the title of "exploded villany," was too much the mode at the time this letter was written, to merit so harsh a censure: and if indignation, in our regenerated days, be excited at the mention of these epithets, let it be remembered, that, at the epocha when M. de Thugut enacted the spy of the court of France against the country of which he is now the ex-minister, this kind of villany was far from being confined to subalterns, however true it may be that it is now exploded. Of the influence of Austrian counsels, and the existence of Austrian committees, regulating the affairs of the French government, from the period of the revolution in 1789, to the fall of the throne in 1792, we have heard much, and probably more than was found-

ed. The causes of the opposition of the court to the first of those events, and which finally brought on the last, lie too near the surface to need profound investigation. There is no evidence that the cabinet of Versailles during the last reign, except near its close, was swayed by that of Vienna; and there is great reason to believe that the former was always on its guard against the attempts of Austrian influence. In the present letter, we see Lewis the Sixteenth giving instructions to his minister respecting the mode of directing the secret negotiations (called *espionnage* by one party, and treason by the other) of M. Thugut; and much management takes place, in order to keep the queen in the dark respecting these mysterious transactions.

That attempts were made to form an Austrian party in the court of France at that period, is a point on which there is no difference of opinion, and of which the caution of the young monarch, in the

counsel he gives his minister, affords indisputable evidence. Lewis the Sixteenth had succeeded, however, if not in crushing, at least in neutralising, this faction, by the change of ministers at his accession, and particularly in the choice of M. de Vergennes, who is represented as a person attached to the principles of the old French politics in their primitive purity, before they were adulterated by the Austrian system of the abbé Bernis, and the duke of Choiseul.

Whatever instances of weakness the king may have exhibited on other occasions, nothing could exceed his firmness in the resistance which he made against the multiplied attempts to bend him to the Austrian yoke. The instructions, given by his father the Dauphin, had been carefully treasured up in his mind; and the ministers who possessed his confidence, such as MM. de Vergennes and Maurepas, were careful that these early impressions should not be weakened. The queen had been tu-

tored in a contrary ſyſtem, with equal ſedulouſneſs, by an aſpiring mother: but her eloquence was idle, and her charms powerleſs, when employed againſt this ſtubborn citadel. So carefully was ſhe excluded from all acquaintance with the ſecret tranſactions of the ſtate, that Lewis the Sixteenth, ſcrupulous in his adherence to the precepts of his father, is repreſented as being ſo much on his guard, that the queen was ignorant even of the place where the memorials of enmity againſt the houſe of Auſtria, which he inherited from the Dauphin, were depoſited, and the number of which was every day augmented, by the jealous attention of the miniſter to foſter this ſalutary averſion in the heart of the prince.

It was at this period that the queen, who, "like a morning ſtar, had juſt appeared on our horizon," (to borrow the elegant phraſeology of the orator) "full of life, and ſplendor, and joy," found every beam refracted, when ſhot into the

political miſt. The ſpirit of chivalry was no more awake to her wrongs at that period, than in ſubſequent times; and this beautiful princeſs ſaw herſelf not only excluded from the confidence of the king in matters which appeared to intereſt her moſt nearly, but expoſed to the pleaſantries of miniſters, who ſmiled at her impotent efforts to replace them, and accuſed her, perhaps without reaſon, of acts of peculation in her adopted country, to enrich the exhauſted treaſury of her imperial brother.

Of the continued ſtruggle between the queen and his miniſters, Lewis is repreſented as remaining the calm obſerver. He ſeems to have made a juſt analyſis of his own affections. He loved the queen for thoſe qualities which rendered her lovely; and his conjugal tenderneſs has never been taxed with alienation or levity: but the ſecrets of the ſtate were never diſcloſed, unleſs in ſome moment of unguarded confidence, which, it has been

ſaid, ſhe was ſometimes earneſt to provoke. To keep her altogether ignorant of the affairs of ſtate was found impoſſible: the mode therefore which was adopted with the greateſt ſucceſs, was to miſlead her with reſpect to the ſecret operations of government. Accordingly, in the letter before us, the ſieur Thugut, the ſpy of France againſt the Auſtrian cabinet, is ſuppoſed by the queen to be an agent in its favor; and ſhe is repreſented by the king as ſo little in the ſecret ("n'étant pas du ſecret,") that meaſures were concerted between him and M. de Vergennes, on the preſumption, that, when this agent ſhould arrive in France, the queen would be ſolicitous to reward his zeal by procuring him ſome place or employment.

But, whatever might have been the amount of diſtruſt or confidence between the king and queen, as exhibited in this letter, the ſieur Thugut appears in no very flattering aſpect. It is evident that this ex-miniſter of the Auſtrian cabinet

had held the poſt of French inſpector of its ſecrets during the reign of Lewis the Fifteenth; which monarch ſeems ſo little to have valued his ſervices, that, in caſe his intrigues (that is, the intrigues of M. Thugut) were diſcovered, he was to expect no aſylum in France. Lewis the Sixteenth, however, appears to hold M. Thugut's ſervices in higher eſtimation. He allows him, under the perſuaſion that this ex-miniſter was no Auſtrian, to come into France, and enjoy the fruits of his labors; and even provides againſt the dangers which may befall him from the ſuſpicions of the court of Vienna, by aſſuring him that M. de Bréteuil ſhall give him indirect protection, and the means of making his eſcape.

That the baron de Thugut was originally a ſpy of France, ſeems to admit of no doubt: but, as I have already obſerved, no concluſion can be drawn on this head againſt the fidelity with which he has ſince acquitted himſelf in his

office of miniſter at Vienna. If his ſucceſs has not equalled his zeal in this laſt employment, it muſt be remembered that he has only failed in an enterpriſe where none have ſucceeded; and that his humiliation and defeat are ſhared with the moſt renowned warriors and able ſtateſmen in Europe, without the pale of the French republic. He has been accuſed of obſtinacy in his perſeverance to continue the war, when all hope of ſucceſs of bringing it to its deſired concluſion had vaniſhed: but hope is deluſive; and we may pardon M. de Thugut for the defect of his political optics, when ſo many others, nearer to the ſcene of action than himſelf, have had their ſight totally obſcured.

LETTRE II.

A M. DE VERGENNES.

11 Avril, 1775.

JE vous renvoye, Monſieur, la dépêche de M. de St. Prieſt. Je ne crois pas que la maiſon d'Autriche entende ſon intérêt en ne voulant pas demander la liberté du commerce de la Mer Noire. Toutes les démarches que ſon cabinet fait depuis quelque tems ſont bien obſcures, et bien fauſſes. Je crois qu'il eſt embarraſſé de ſes nouvelles uſurpations en Moldavie, et qu'il ne ſait comment ſe les faire adjuger: la cour de Ruſſie les déſapprouve; et la Porte ne conſentira jamais à les céder à l'empereur. Je ne crois nullement à ce nouvel accord entre ces cours co-partageantes. Je les crois plutôt en obſervation vis-à-vis les unes des autres, et ſe défiant d'elles mutuellement. L'avis de M. de Lauzun me confirme

dans ma penſée. Pour ce qui eſt de l'invaſion que les troupes de l'empereur ont faite dans l'état de Veniſe, je n'y vois nulle raiſon ; mais la loi du plus fort eſt toujours la meilleure : elle dénote bien le caractère ambitieux et deſpote de l'empereur, dont il ne s'eſt pas caché au baron de Bréteuil. Il faut croire qu'il a ſu faſciner abſolument les yeux de ſa mère ; car toutes ſes uſurpations n'étaient point de ſon goût ; et elle l'avait bien déclaré au commencement. La dépêche que reçut M. Thugut, prouve bien que M. de Kaunitz déſapprouve tout ce qui ſe paſſe, et a eu la main forcée : c'eſt ſûrement du Laſcy. Nous n'avons rien à faire dans ce moment, que de tout voir, et nous tenir ſur nos gardes ſur ce qui nous viendra de Vienne. Honnêteté et retenue doivent être notre marche : mais M. de St. Prieſt peut toujours tâter le terrein à Conſtantinople, ſur la navigation libre de la Mer Noire. Je me trompe fort, ſi les trois cours ne prendront pas querelle à la fois : et garde l'incendie !

LETTER II.

(*Tranſlation.*)

TO MR. DE VERGENNES.

April 11th, 1775.

I SEND you back, Sir, the diſpatches of M. de St. Prieſt, and do not think the houſe of Auſtria conſults its own intereſt by refuſing to demand freedom of commerce on the Black Sea. Every meaſure taken by that cabinet for ſome time paſt is obſcure and falſe. It is, I believe, rather embarraſſed by its new uſurpations in Moldavia, and does not well know how to obtain their confirmation. They are diſapproved by the court of Ruſſia; and the Porte will never conſent to yield them to the emperor. I do not give the ſmalleſt credit to this new convention between the co-participating courts. I conſider them as placed in obſervation on

each other, and watching every movement with mutual diſtruſt; and the intelligence I have received from M. de Lauzun, confirms me in this opinion. There appears to me no reaſonable motive for the invaſion of the ſtate of Venice by the emperor's troops: but the law of the ſtrongeſt is always the beſt. This aggreſſion marks the ambitious and deſpotic character of the emperor, which he has taken no trouble to conceal from the baron de Bréteuil. He ſeems to have faſcinated the eyes of his mother; for ſhe had no taſte for theſe uſurpations; which ſhe openly declared in the commencement. The diſpatches received by M. Thugut ſhew clearly that M. de Kaunitz diſapproves of all that is paſſing, and has only acted by compulſion. The main-ſpring, no doubt, is Laſcy; and all we have to do at preſent is to obſerve attentively, and be on our guard againſt whatever comes to us from Vienna. Politeneſs and reſerve ſhould form the whole of our conduct. M. de St. Prieſt may, however, ſound the diſ-

positions at Conſtantinople, relative to the free navigation of the Black Sea. If I am not much deceived, the three courts will quarrel at the ſame time: and then let us beware of the conflagration.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IId LETTER.

AFTER the uſurpations in Moldavia and the continued projects of aggrandiſement on the part of the Auſtrian cabinet, it was not ſurpriſing that that government ſolicited without heſitation from the Porte the liberty of trading in the Black Sea: but it is difficult to conceive why France ſhould not have aſked this privilege excluſively for herſelf; which would not only have been highly advantageous for the country, but would have been the means of connecting it more cloſely with the Porte, and would have enabled the cabinet of Verſailles to oppoſe with all its influence the projects of Ruſſia on Turkey in Europe.

Though the king was yet little practiſed in the art of government, he knew enough

to perceive, that, under certain inſtitutions, power was right; ſince, as he obſerves in ſomewhat of an ironical tone, the law of the ſtrongeſt is always the beſt. Lewis felt the injuſtice of thoſe encroachments againſt which he inveighs, lamenting, as a man, what he could not remedy as a prince. It is very probable, however, that, had not the American war intervened, and, ſoon after, that of the French revolution, the three powers which divided Poland would not have remained long in harmony together. The French revolution has altogether deranged the old diplomacy of the Northern cabinets. The fate of the Turkiſh empire is ſtill ſuſpended; and he muſt be no dim-ſighted politician who ſhall determine with any degree of certainty the epocha of its diſſolution. But, if it exiſts only from the jealouſy of the European powers, the friends of the progreſs of civiliſation and the extenſion of knowledge will perhaps wiſh they may one day come to a better underſtanding.

In this letter, baron Thugut appears again on the ſcene, where he ſhews himſelf no friend to the aggrandiſement of the houſe of Auſtria. Every man fulfills his deſtiny. The baron appears to have been the friend of France, and, willingly or unwillingly, has acted well the part which Providence aſſigned him. We are told that he is once more approaching the cabinet of Vienna :—perhaps the meaſure of defeat and humiliation of the Auſtrian court is not yet complete.

LETTRE III.

A M. DE ST. GERMAIN.

(ſans date.)

MONSIEUR,

LE mode uniforme de manœuvre pour toute l'infanterie Françaiſe, que vous m'adreſſez, eſt abſolument néceſſaire. Vouz le propoſez; et je lui donne avec plaiſir mon approbation. Il trouvera ſans doute des contradicteurs: mais il doit plaire aux vrais militaires. Vous demandez, dans un autre mémoire, qu'il ſoit inſtitué, pour les ſoldats et pour les bas officiers, un ordre de *Mars*, dont les ſignes reſpectés ſeraient conférés ſur le champ de bataille aux braves jugés dignes de cet honneur. J'adopte cette idée avec joie: le Français, naturellement paſſionné pour la gloire, ſent des récompenſes ho-

norables. L'ordre de *Mars* deviendrait pour lui un puiſſant aiguillon pour bien faire. C'eſt ainſi que les Bayard, les Crillon, les Dugueſclin, faiſaient des ſoldats, et les conduiſaient à la victoire. Donnez à votre projet de nouveaux developpemens : cherchez tous les moyens d'exciter l'émulation, de récompenſer la bravoure, de faire parler l'honneur. Le ſoldat Français mérite bien que le chef de l'état s'occupe de lui.

LETTER III.

(Translation.)

TO M. DE ST. GERMAIN.

(without date.)

SIR,

THE uniform mode of manœuvring for all the French infantry, which you propose to me, is absolutely necessary; and I give with pleasure my approbation to your plan. It will, no doubt, meet with opposition, but must be agreeable to real military men. You demand, in another memorial, that an order of *Mars* should be instituted for the soldiers and subaltern officers, the respectable insignia of which should be conferred, upon the field of battle, on such as are judged worthy of that honor. I adopt this idea with delight: Frenchmen, whose ruling passion is glory, appreciate honorable rewards; and the order of *Mars* will be-

come a powerful ſtimulant to generous actions. It was thus that the Bayards, the Crillons, the Dugueſclins, formed ſoldiers, and led them on to victory. Explain your plan more fully; ſeek every means of exciting emulation, of recompenſing valour, and of making the voice of honor be heard. The French ſoldier well deſerves that thoſe who are at the head of the nation ſhould take an intereſt in his concerns.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IIId LETTER.

NO event created, at the time, more ſurpriſe at Verſailles than the nomination of the Count de St. Germain to the war-department. The hiſtory of this general is ſomewhat ſingular. He was at firſt a Jeſuit; which profeſſion he left for that of the army, where he ſerved with the rank of lieutenant. An affair of honor led him to paſs into the ſervice of the Elector Palatine, which he quitted for that of the Emperor Charles, where he obtained the rank of major-general. Upon the death of this prince, he returned to France as field-marſhal, was made lieutenant-general in 1784, and, during the peace which followed that period, had the command of Flanders. In conſequence of a diſpute with Marſhal Broglio

in 1760 he went to Denmark, where the king named him field-marſhal, and gave him the command of all his troops. On the king's death, being obliged to reſign his command, he returned to live near Worms, and fixed his definitive reſidence in Alſace.

This nomination cauſed the more wonder, as the name of M. de St. Germain had never been mentioned among the competitors for this department. In the memoirs written at that period, the hiſtory is thus related: M. de Maleſherbes was converſing in his cabinet with M. Dubois, commander of the police, on the affairs of the court, when he obſerved that there were many competitors for the war-department then vacant, naming Meſſieurs du Châtelet, de Breteuil, de Caſtries, and de Vaux. "The whole court is in agitation," ſays Maleſherbes: "whom would you chuſe, my friend, if you were king?"—"A perſon, Mon-

ſeigneur, who is not on the liſt of candidates, becauſe virtue and merit conceal themſelves—the Count de St. Germain." "You are in the right," exclaimed the miniſter; "he is a man of great merit; and his mind has been proved by misfortune and injuſtice. But we are building caſtles in the air; he has no protectors. O that I were the maſter!"—Here the converſation ended: but, the ſame evening, the ſubject of the nomination of the new miniſter was renewed with M. de Maurepas. "Whilſt the king is employed in chooſing," ſaid M. de Maleſherbes, "I will give you an idea of a friend of mine, which is, to beſtow the place on M. de St. Germain. I own I think him very capable of filling it: but he is abſent, and without protectors."—"Without protectors!" replied M. de Maurepas: "let us be his friends; he poſſeſſes talents, and, independantly of his military abilities, has written me letters filled with excellent ideas." M. de Maurepas went to

the king, and gave him an account of his converſation with M. de Maleſherbes.—The king decided at once in favor of M. de St. Germain, recommended the greateſt ſecrecy, wrote the letter, and ordered the two miniſters to ſend it to Alſace by a confidential meſſenger. A perſon of this kind was found—one who had been attached to the general through all his fortunes. When he reached his habitation, he found the modern Cincinnatus planting a pear-tree. M. de St. Germain recogniſed the ſtranger—"Is it you?" he exclaimed. "What, in the name of heaven, brought you here?"—"A matter of importance," he was anſwered: "but finiſh your planting; and then we will go into the houſe." "—Speak: I ſhall find time enough to plant."—"I come by his majeſty's orders."—"What! has ſome one again prejudiced the king againſt one of his moſt faithful ſervants, and who has no other regret, than that of being no longer uſeful to him? have I not yet filled up my

cup of misfortunes ?"—" This, Monſieur le Comte, will be eaſy to bear: here is the diſpatch ; read it."—M. de St. Germain kiſſed the letter with tranſport, and ſtammered out a few words of acknowledgement. " What has led the king to think of me ?" The meſſenger told him that he had received inſtructions to requeſt him to ſet out inſtantly.—" But how? I have neither dreſs nor equipage, to appear at court."—" In whatever manner you go, you will be welcome. Come along ! let us ſet off."

Of the order in queſtion, and which forms the ſubject of the king's letter, we are altogether ignorant; ſince nothing occurs in the memoirs of the time, to throw light on this matter. The king appears to have been an enthuſiaſt, at the moment, for the inſtitution of this military nobility, as the reward of courage and virtue, and which was probably meant by this reforming miniſter as a counterpoiſe

to that ordinary nobility which founds its diſtinction on no ſuch adventitious qualities. As we hear nothing further of this inſtitution than what is contained in the king's letter, it is not unlikely that the *habitués* of the court were ſucceſsful in oppoſing this romantic innovation.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IIId LETTER.

NO event created, at the time, more ſurpriſe at Verſailles than the nomination of the Count de St. Germain to the war-department. The hiſtory of this general is ſomewhat ſingular. He was at firſt a Jeſuit; which profeſſion he left for that of the army, where he ſerved with the rank of lieutenant. An affair of honor led him to paſs into the ſervice of the Elector Palatine, which he quitted for that of the Emperor Charles, where he obtained the rank of major-general. Upon the death of this prince, he returned to France as field-marſhal, was made lieutenant-general in 1784, and, during the peace which followed that period, had the command of Flanders. In conſequence of a diſpute with Marſhal Broglio

in 1760 he went to Denmark, where the king named him field-marſhal, and gave him the command of all his troops. On the king's death, being obliged to reſign his command, he returned to live near Worms, and fixed his definitive reſidence in Alſace.

This nomination cauſed the more wonder, as the name of M. de St. Germain had never been mentioned among the competitors for this department. In the memoirs written at that period, the hiſtory is thus related: M. de Maleſherbes was converſing in his cabinet with M. Dubois, commander of the police, on the affairs of the court, when he obſerved that there were many competitors for the war-department then vacant, naming Meſſieurs du Châtelet, de Breteuil, de Caſtries, and de Vaux. "The whole court is in agitation," ſays Maleſherbes: "whom would you chuſe, my friend, if you were king?"—"A perſon, Mon-

ſeigneur, who is not on the liſt of candidates, becauſe virtue and merit conceal themſelves—the Count de St. Germain." "You are in the right," exclaimed the miniſter; "he is a man of great merit; and his mind has been proved by misfortune and injuſtice. But we are building caſtles in the air; he has no protectors. O that I were the maſter!"—Here the converſation ended: but, the ſame evening, the ſubject of the nomination of the new miniſter was renewed with M. de Maurepas. "Whilſt the king is employed in chooſing," ſaid M. de Maleſherbes, "I will give you an idea of a friend of mine, which is, to beſtow the place on M. de St. Germain. I own I think him very capable of filling it: but he is abſent, and without protectors."—"Without protectors!" replied M. de Maurepas: "let us be his friends; he poſſeſſes talents, and, independantly of his military abilities, has written me letters filled with excellent ideas." M. de Maurepas went to

the king, and gave him an account of his converſation with M. de Maleſherbes.—The king decided at once in favor of M. de St. Germain, recommended the greateſt ſecrecy, wrote the letter, and ordered the two miniſters to ſend it to Alſace by a confidential meſſenger. A perſon of this kind was found—one who had been attached to the general through all his fortunes. When he reached his habitation, he found the modern Cincinnatus planting a pear-tree. M. de St. Germain recogniſed the ſtranger—"Is it you?" he exclaimed. "What, in the name of heaven, brought you here?"—"A matter of importance," he was anſwered: "but finiſh your planting; and then we will go into the houſe." "—Speak: I ſhall find time enough to plant."—"I come by his majeſty's orders."—"What! has ſome one again prejudiced the king againſt one of his moſt faithful ſervants, and who has no other regret, than that of being no longer uſeful to him? have I not yet filled up my

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LETTRE IV.

A M. DE MALESHERBES.

Verſailles, 17 Avril, 1776.

JE n'ai pu vous exprimer aſſez dans notre dernier entretien, mon cher Malesherbes, tout le déplaiſir que me cauſait votre réſolution bien prononcée de vous démettre de votre miniſtère. Maintenant que j'ai réfléchi avec quelque maturité ſur cet objet, je vais vous ouvrir mon cœur; et je tranſmets mes idées ſur le papier, pour qu'elles ne s'échappent point de ma mémoire.

Entouré comme je le ſuis d'hommes qui ont intérêt à égarer mes principes, à empêcher que l'opinion publique ne parvienne juſqu'à moi, il eſt de la plus haute importance pour la proſpérité de mon règne que mes yeux de tems en tems ſe repoſent avec ſatisfaction ſur quelques

ſages de mon choix, que je puiſſe appeler les amis de mon cœur, et qui m'avertiſſent de mes erreurs, avant qu'elles ayent influé ſur la deſtinée de vingt quatre millions d'hommes.

Vous êtes, avec le ſage de Maurepas, et l'intrépide Turgot, l'homme de mon royaume qui avez le plus de titres à ma confiance ; et il ne faut pas faire entendre à nos ennemis communs que vous êtes ſur le point de la perdre lorſque vous ne l'avez jamais plus méritée.

Lorſque Maurepas m'eut preſenté votre nom comme un de ceux qui étaient le plus faits pour donner du poids à mes projets de bienfaiſance, j'étudiai en ſilence votre vie publique et privée ; et je vis que je ſerais peut-être plus heureux de vous offrir une grande place, que vous de la recevoir.

Ma cour des aides était, avant votre

première préſidence, une compagnie aſſez mal organiſée, qui ſe laiſſait ſoudoyer par les financiers dont on lui avait donné la ſurveillance. Jamais un contrôleur général ne la trouvait en oppoſition, quand il lui préſentait des édits burſaux odieux: Vous êtes venu, mon cher Maleſherbes; vous avez purgé ce corps des membres qui le déshonoraient; et, d'après ſon inſtitution primitive, il eſt dévenue l'aſyle de l'indigent et de l'opprimé.

La nature vous avait donné une ame citoyenne; et vous l'avez tranſmiſe à votre cour des aides: du moins j'en juge par les remontrances vigoureuſes que vous lui avez dictées, et que j'ai placées, dans ma bibliothéque choiſie, entre les Catilinaires de Ciceron et les Philippiques de Demoſthenes. Je ne ſuis pas encore bien ſûr qu'il ſoit utile de jetter des maximes ſi philoſophiques au travers d'une conſtitution monarchique, que tant de mécontens ont intérêt à ébranler: mais

vos remontrances reſpiraient le bien public ; elles m'eclairaient ſur des déſordres que ma cour et mes miniſtres conſpiraient à me cacher ; et je ne les ai conſidérées que ſous ce point de vue. Alors, malgré quelques principes qui ne pouvaient avoir mon aſſentiment, j'ai applaudi intérieurement à votre courage, et j'ai ſenti que vous aviez des droits à ma reconnaiſſance.

Nos entrevues, où Maurepas était en tiers pour nous juger tous deux, ajouterent à mon eſtime ; et je vous donnai le département de ma maiſon, vacant par la démiſſion de la Vrillière. Vous balançâtes long-tems à venir reſpirer, à ma cour, un air qui convenait peu à la touchante ſimplicité de vos mœurs ; mais Turgot vous fit entendre qu'il ne pouvait pas, ſans vous, opérer un bien durable : il vous decida ; et je l'en eſtimai d'avantage.

Vous avez commencé votre miniſtère avec une vigueur qui ne contrariait pas mes principes. On ſe plaignait des lettres

de cachet dont votre prédéceſſeur diſpoſait au gré de ſes favoris ; et vous avez refuſé d'en faire uſage. La Baſtille regorgeait de priſonniers, qui, après pluſieurs années de détention, ignoraient quelquefois leurs crimes ; et vous avez rendu à la liberté tous les hommes à qui on ne reprochait que d'avoir déplu à ces meſſieurs en faveur, et tous les coupables qui avaient été trop punis.

Vous avez entrepris des reformes utiles dans ma maiſon militaire : mais bien des gens ont conçu des alarmes ; je devais appréhender que le mécontentement n'entrainât des troubles pareils à ceux de la Ligue et de la Fronde ; et alors j'ai été obligé de renvoyer à des tems plus heureux le moment ſi cher à mon cœur, où, banniſſant une vaine pompe, je n'aurai plus d'autre maiſon que les hommes de bien, tels que vous, qui m'entourent, et, pour garde, les cœurs des Français.

C'eſt dans cette circonſtance orageuſe,

mon cher Maleſherbes, que vous me demandez votre retraite ! Non, je ne vous l'accorderai pas : vous etes trop néceſſaire à mon ſervice : et, quand vous aurez lu cette lettre en entier, je connais aſſez votre ame ſenſible, pour croire que vous ceſſerez de me le demander.

D'ailleurs, ce n'eſt pas au moment que vous êtes obligé de céder aux circonſtances, qu'il convient que vous donniez votre démiſſion. La cour vous croirait en diſgrace ; et ce mot, quand il s'agit d'un ſujet auſſi récommandable que vous, ne doit jamais m'échapper.

Je vous attends demain chez Maurepas. Comptez ſur mon eſtime, et ſur mon amitié.

LOUIS.

LETTER IV.

(Translation.)

TO M. DE MALESHERBES.

Verſailles, April 17, 1776.

I HAD no power to expreſs to you, my dear Maleſherbes, in our laſt interview, all the chagrin I felt at your determined reſolution of reſigning your place in the miniſtry. After having maturely reflected on this ſubject, I ſhall unfold my heart to you, and ſhall commit my ideas to paper, that they may not eſcape from my memory.

Surrounded, as I am, by men who are interreſtd in miſleading my principles, and preventing the voice of public opinion from reaching my ear, it is of the higheſt importance to the proſperity of my reign, that I ſhould ſometimes be able to repoſe my eyes with ſatisfaction on a few ſages of my own choice, whom I

may call the friends of my heart, and who will warn me of my errors, before they have influenced the deſtiny of twenty-four millions of men.

You, together with the wiſe de Maurepas and the intrepid Tugot, are the men in my dominions who have the higheſt claim to my confidence; and you muſt not lead our common enemies to imagine that you are on the point of loſing that confidence, at the very moment when you have moſt deſerved it.

When Maurepas preſented your name to me as one of thoſe who were beſt fitted to give weight to my plans of beneficence, I examined in ſilence your public and private life, and perceived that I ſhould perhaps be happier in offering you a great place, than you in receiving it.

Before your firſt preſidency, my Cour des Aides was a company ill organiſed, and corrupted by the financiers, whom

we had placed under its inſpection. A comptroller general never found any oppoſition when he preſented odious fiſcal edicts. You appeared, my dear Malesherbes: you have driven from this corps the members which diſhonored it; and it is now become, agreeably to its primitive inſtitution, the aſylum of the indigent and the oppreſſed.

Nature gave you the ſoul of a citizen; and you have transfuſed it into your Cour des Aides; at leaſt if I may judge by the vigorous remonſtrances which you have dictated, and which I have placed, in my choſen library, between the Catilinarians of Cicero, and the Philippics of Demoſthenes. I am not indeed ſure whether it be uſeful to throw maxims ſo philoſophical acroſs a monarchical conſtitution, which ſo many have an intereſt in ſhaking: but your remonſtrances breathed the ſpirit of public good; they explained to me the diſorders which my court and my miniſters had conſpired to hide; and I

have conſidered them only under this point of view. Notwithſtanding, therefore, they hold forth ſome principles to which I could not aſſent, I inwardly applauded your courage, and felt that you had a right to my gratitude.

Our interviews, at which Maurepas was preſent to judge us both, ſerved to increaſe my eſteem; and I gave you that department of my houſe, vacant by the diſmiſſion of la Vrillière. You long balanced whether you ſhould come, and breathe the air of my court, ſo ill in ſympathy with the intereſting ſimplicity of your manners. Turgot made you underſtand, that, without your aid, he could operate no durable good: he determined you; and I eſteemed him the more.

You began your miniſtry with a degree of vigor no way contradictory to my principles, by refuſing to make uſe of *lettres de cachet*, which were ſo much complained of, and of which your predeceſſor diſ-

poſed at the will of his favorites. The Baſtille overflowed with priſoners, who, after years of confinement, were ſometimes ignorant of their crimes; and you reſtored to liberty all thoſe who had only to reproach themſelves with having diſpleaſed thoſe gentlemen in power, and ſuch of the guilty as had been too ſeverely puniſhed.

You undertook uſeful reforms in my military eſtabliſhment: but many perſons conceived alarms. I had reaſon to apprehend, that the diſcontent might produce troubles reſembling thoſe of the League, and the Fronde; and I was obliged to reſerve for a happier period the moment ſo dear to my heart, when, baniſhing vain pomp, I ſhall have compoſed my houſehold of men of worth, ſuch as you, who ſurround me, and ſhall have, for guards, the hearts of the French.

It is in this trying conjuncture, my dear Maleſherbes, that you aſk leave to retire!

No, I will not grant your requeſt: you are too neceſſary to my ſervice; and, when you have read the whole of this letter, I know enough of your ſenſibility, to believe that you will ceaſe your demand. Beſides, it is not at the very moment when you are obliged to yield to circumſtances, that you ought to give in your reſignation. The court will think you in diſgrace; and that word, when it relates to a ſubject ſo reſpectable as yourſelf, ought never to paſs my lips.

I expect you to-morrow at Maurepas'. Be aſſured of my eſteem and friendſhip.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IVth LETTER.

M. DE MALESHERBES is a character on whom we may be laviſh of praiſe, without the cenſure of extravagance. This celebrated perſonage had occupied the place of ſecretary of ſtate about nine months from the date of this letter, having ſucceeded the duke de la Vrillière, the July preceding. Under Lewis the Fifteenth, he held an office unknown in civiliſed countries, which in France was called *Directeur de la librairie*, and which may be tranſlated, *Inſpector of the preſs*. This place he appears to have filled with conſiderable ſatisfaction to all thoſe whom it was his office to perſecute and impugn; and the conſtituted gaoler of the human mind was hailed as the friend of freedom and philoſophy, and the protector of all enlightened men.

But it appears that M. de Maleſherbes not only protected philoſophy and literature, but carried the heroiſm of his office to a ſtill further exceſs, and placed the tribunal of letters on a level with that of juſtice, pretending that its deciſions had the force of law. Under his adminiſtration, aroſe that formidable power called public opinion, which was deſtined not only to brave, but finally to overpower and cruſh, deſpotic authority. M. de Maleſherbes was a diſciple, or rather a profeſſor, of the doctrine of the perfectibility of the human mind, which doctrine at that period had many illuſtrious votaries. It was in purſuance of this theory, that numerous reforms took place in the French government on the acceſſion of Lewis the Sixteenth. This prince was too juſt, not to feel and acquieſce in the neceſſity of thoſe reforms, but unfortunately had neither ſufficient ſtrength to direct, nor conſtancy to ſupport them.

M. de Maleſherbes, therefore, comes

forward on the ſcene, only to make us regret his loſs; but it does not appear what were the immediate motives which led him to have formed ſo decided a reſolution as that mentioned in the opening of this letter. It was with conſiderable repugnance, and after many interviews with the king, that he was prevailed on to accept the place of miniſter. He ſtipulated his conditions on his entering into office—conditions, not ſuch as the intereſted uſually bargain for in ſimilar circumſtances—conditions for himſelf—but ſtipulations of benevolence and mercy for others. Before he undertook the charge, he received the royal promiſe that no *lettres de cachet* ſhould be ſigned, but ſuch as he preſented; that his place ſhould be held during his own pleaſure, and that his retreat ſhould not be obſtructed by any royal reclamation.

M. de Maleſherbes was preſident of the Cour des Aides at the time when Lewis the Fifteenth determined to ſuppreſs the

parliaments. Whatever oppoſition might have exiſted in theſe judiciary corporations againſt the royal authority, the remedy propoſed by M. de Maleſherbes in the convocation of the ſtates-general, would have had little tendency to diminiſh. He was right in obſerving that courts of juſtice were imperfect organs of the public will; but national repreſentation, ſuch as that by the ſtates-general, was ſtill leſs likely to be the ſupport of arbitrary power. How fatal to ſuch power was this plan of M. de Maleſherbes, when carried into execution twenty years afterwards, the hiſtory of the revolution has ſhewn. In the preſent inſtance, it is his integrity as adminiſtrator, and his knowledge as financier, which the king mentions with ſuch diſtinguiſhed eulogium.

"Nature," ſays the king, "has given you the ſoul of a citizen." The expreſſion does honor to the perſonage by whom it was penned, and ſtill more to the virtuous miniſter to whom it was ad-

dreſſed. Great credit is due to the judgement of the king, as ſuch, in the critique which he paſſes on the philoſophical maxims which pervaded the remonſtrances in queſtion. The knowledge of M. de Maleſherbes' democratic and anti-catholic principles was not diſſembled by him: but he knew alſo how to diſtinguiſh between the real lover of his country, and the ſecret enemy of the altar, if not the lukewarm friend of the throne.

No part of the adminiſtration entruſted to M. de Maleſherbes appears to have occupied him more than the abuſes relative to *lettres de cachet*. In a memorial preſented to the king, he ſtates that he found more than half the number of priſoners in the Baſtille, and the dungeons of Vincennes, had been confined upwards of fifteen years, and that their loſs of reaſon rendered them unfit for the enjoyment of liberty. The horror which a benevolent mind muſt feel at ſuch a diſcovery can be eaſily comprehended: but it was

leſs the ſight of the victims, than the power of making ſuch, which excited thoſe emotions. "I ſhuddered," exclaims this benevolent miniſter, "on my entering into office, when I found myſelf ſeated at my bureau, oppoſite to a ſingle ſecretary, and abſolute maſter of pronouncing arbitrarily, and without appeal, ſentences of ſo dreadful a nature."

The whole of this letter, which was communicated to the editor by M. de Maleſherbes, places the king in a moſt reſpectable and amiable point of view. He appears ſolicitous to enter into a confederacy with enlightened and virtuous men, againſt thoſe who ſurrounded him, and whom he repreſents as intereſted in miſleading his opinions, and preventing that of the public from ever reaching his ear. He talks of the wiſdom of Maurepas, and the intrepidity of Turgot, as if this wiſdom and intrepidity, like the men who are deſignated as the poſſeſſors, were the objects of his earneſt choice. It were

to argue a great deficiency in candor, not to believe that theſe profeſſions, when they were made, proceeded from a mind that felt their full influence. Youth is the ſeaſon of ingenuity: the king ſpoke as he felt; but youth alſo is the ſeaſon of inconſtancy; and this was one of the king's conſtitutional defects. Thoſe who charge him with hypocriſy at this early age, know but little of the human heart; nor ought the perſeverance of M. de Maleſherbes, even after the affectionate concluſion of this letter, to be conſtrued into any other motive than that of ſeeing the approaching triumph of the enemies to reform, and probably what the king did not himſelf at the time perceive, an approaching diſpoſition to yield to thoſe whom he repreſents to his miniſter as his moſt dangerous enemies.

We have made a few curſory obſervations on three of the miniſters who at this period compoſed the adminiſtration, the chief director of which was the Count

de Maurepas, who has been ſtyled the Mentor of the French monarch.

Maurepas was called to the direction of public affairs by Lewis the Sixteenth, from an exile of twenty-five years during the reign of his grandfather. Lewis the Fifteenth inherited from his predeceſſor none of the few virtues he poſſeſſed, and all his vices. Though endowed with few faculties for governing, and delivered up to the groſſeſt ſenſualities, he had contrived, nevertheleſs, by following the maxims left him by Lewis the Fourteenth, to keep the nation in the ſame ſtate of political and civil ſervitude in which he had found it. His increaſing age and debauchery leſſened ſtill more the few powers he poſſeſſed: the government of the ſtate fell under the direction of miniſters who very faithfully adhered to, and even perfected, the ſyſtematic deſpotiſm of the maſter. Of theſe miniſters, Maupeou and Terray were the moſt intrepid in combating the philoſophic

opinions which were then opening on France, and puniſhing, in various modes, their authors and abettors. Their laſt vigorous act of deſpotiſm was the diſſolution of the parliaments, whoſe privileges, however limited, ſerved yet as a dyke againſt the erection of the monarchy into an abſolute and indeterminate tyranny. One of the firſt acts of the Count de Maurepas, was there call of the exiled parliaments, and the diſgrace of the late king's miniſters. A total revolution was operated in the internal government by the diſmiſſion of Maupeou, Terray, and their collegues, whoſe places were occupied by Turgot and Maleſherbes; and the definitive diſgrace of the Duke of Choiſeul humbled the Auſtrian party, which, under the protection of the queen, was gaining influence in the cabinet of Verſailles.

Whether M. de Maurepas was himſelf imbued with liberal ſentiments, no miniſter could have acted with more efficacy towards the deſtruction of that ſyſtematic

tyranny which had weighed hitherto on France. A viſible and very potent motive for action may indeed be found in his perſonal reſentment againſt the miniſters of Lewis the Fifteenth: and, though the recall of the parliaments might have been neceſſary to ſtrengthen his own authority, while it leſſened that of the crown, yet the admiſſion of ſuch men as Maleſherbes and Turgot to the adminiſtration of affairs, men of revolutionary energy and incorruptible faith, would lead us to ſuppoſe that he had ſome more honorable feeling than reſentment to gratify; and that, notwithſtanding what has been called the inconceivable lightneſs of his character, he was himſelf the friend of many of thoſe reforms which afterwards took place in the government. If thoſe men were only the inſtruments of his ambition, to keep himſelf in place, and the king under his tuition, it is leſs his levity than his raſhneſs, which appears inconceivable.

LETTRE V.

A M. TURGOT.

Ce 15 Avril, 1776.

VOTRE adminiſtration bienfaiſante, mon cher Turgot, vous fait honneur : elle obtient l'approbation de tous les Français. Vos vues grandes et ſages, le bien que vous opérez, les ſervices que vous me rendez, ne ſauraient s'oublier : ils ſont gravés dans ma mémoire, et encore plus dans mon cœur. Que cette lettre ſoit pour vous un témoignage de la ſatisfaction de votre roi, et de votre ami. Continuez de faire le bonheur des Français ; et vous ferez celui d'un roi qui ne veut être que le père de ſes ſujets. J'ai lu votre mémoire : il eſt rempli de vues ſages et utiles ; mais je crains que ce ne ſoit là encore le rêve d'un homme de bien.

Nous le méditerons enſemble ; et peut-être que par ce moyen nous pourrons réparer bien des maux, et amener d'utiles changemens. Adieu.

LOUIS.

LETTER V.

(Translation.)

TO M. TURGOT.

April 15, 1776.

YOUR benevolent adminiſtration, my dear Turgot, does you honor, and obtains the approbation of every Frenchman. The greatneſs and wiſdom of your views, the good you effectuate, and the ſervices you have rendered me, cannot be forgotten: they are engraved on my memory, and ſtill deeper on my heart. May this letter be a witneſs for you of the ſatiſfaction you have conferred on your king and your friend. Continue to render the French happy: and you will thus beſtow happineſs on a king whoſe only deſire is to be the father of his ſubjects. I have read your note: it is replete with wiſe and uſeful projects; but I fear that this alſo

is only the dream of a good man. We will meditate together upon theſe things; and we may perhaps, by this mean, repair many evils, and produce uſeful changes. Adieu.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE Vth LETTER.

THE name of M. Turgot has become ſo familiar, and his acts, when miniſter, have had ſo conſiderable an influence on the fate of the French nation, that it is almoſt needleſs to enter into any details reſpecting either his perſonal hiſtory, or that of his adminiſtration. It is from the time that this celebrated perſonage was called to the functions of comptroller or miniſter of finance, that we may date the epocha of the French revolution; for, though this great event really took place after the lapſe of fifteen years, yet the principles of government which he introduced, the reforms which he made, and the ſtill greater which he meditated, annex to his name the honor, or the reproach, of being the father of the French revolution.

Turgot was deſtined by his family for holy orders: he received an eccleſiaſtical education at the ſeminary of St. Sulpice, and was prior of the Sorbonne. One of his diſcourſes at that period has been noticed for its eloquence: the ſubject was the utility which nations have reaped from the Chriſtian religion. The morality of the pagans, he obſerves in this diſcourſe, conſiſted only in the art of forming citizens of a certain nation, or philoſophers diſtinguiſhed by the pre-eminence of their maxims, ſuperior to that of their cotemporaries; while Chriſtian morality, on the contrary, had obligatory maxims and duties for its baſis, and creates in man a new creature; that it was the protectreſs of equality of rights; laboured for the deſtruction of domeſtic and feudal ſlavery, and contributed, by the mildneſs of its precepts, to ſoften that reſtleſs and turbulent ſpirit which characteriſed the nations of the antient world. There is nothing new in theſe obſervations: but the opinion of ſo eminent a man as Tur-

got, in a point of ſuch infinite importance, is at all times worth the repetition. Had the reforming philoſophers of our days thought or written as reaſonably as their maſter, we ſhould have leſs to lament certain effects of the French revolution.

M. Turgot ſoon afterwards endeavoured to eſtabliſh a doctrine which has met with a more favorable reception, that of the continual progreſs of the human mind to a ſtate of perfection, or what is called the doctrine of perfectibility. In this work, which remains unpubliſhed, he ſpeaks of certain events, as haſtening this great amelioration. One of thoſe events was the American revolution, which he lived to ſee accompliſhed. Of the effects of this revolution he conceived hopes, which, under the adminiſtration of the wiſe preſident who is now called to govern that vaſt country, ſeem likely to be realiſed.

This ſyſtem of perfectibility was not

an idle hypotheſis in the mind of M. Turgot. It was a principle on which he continually acted; and the province of Limoges, of which he was the intendant for fifteen or twenty years, beheld the phænomenon of an adminiſtrator, whoſe efforts were habitually directed to counteract or ſoften the fiſcal calamities which his predeceſſors or collegues had ſo often thought it their duty to aid or aggravate. He was never known to publiſh an edict or declaration which tended to burden the people: though an executive officer only, he conſtantly refuſed his obedience; and it was one of thoſe refuſals which firſt made him noticed by the king. When the intendants were ſent to their provinces, it was uſual to introduce them into the council to receive their inſtructions. Thoſe which M. Turgot received from the Abbé Terray, contained orders for new taxes, the impoſition of which he reſiſted with firmneſs, and prayed the king to accept his reſignation, rather than make him an inſtrument of

cruſhing his ſubjects, already too much oppreſſed. The king ſaid not a word: but, ſoon after, Turgot was called to the miniſtry of the marine, from whence he was ſummoned to fill the poſt of comptroller of finance, in the place of the Abbé Terray.

This important office was accepted by M. Turgot with much heſitation, and after the ſtipulation of ſeveral conditions, of which the principal were ſevere œconomy, no bankruptcy, no new taxes, and no loans. The motives for theſe requiſitions were explained in a memorial, and are too obvious to be noticed. When he entered into office, he found his department in the greateſt diſorder, as might well be imagined; the expenditure exceeding the receipt, anticipations on the revenue, and conſiderable arrears. His firſt great operation was the eſtabliſhment of the liberty of the corn-trade throughout the interior of France, which gave general ſatisfaction to the country, but

which met with violent partial oppoſition from ſuch as were intereſted in the reſtriction. Among the moſt formidable of M. Turgot's antagoniſts on this occaſion, was M. Necker, then a banker at Paris, whoſe hoſtility is marked, by the memorialiſts of the time, as leſs the effect of difference of opinion reſpecting the object, than of envy at ſeeing his own plans of reformation foreſtalled. He wept (it is the brother of M. Turgot that ſpeaks), like Alexander at the conqueſts of his father, conqueſts which he wiſhed himſelf to have made. Impelled by feelings of reſentment, M. Necker attacked plans which tended to regenerate France, and the moſt important of its concerns, that of trade and finance. His pamphlet appeared at the moment that the famous revolt, excited by the enemies of the miniſter, took place at Paris.

The great baſis of M. Turgot's operations, called the ſyſtem of the œconomiſts, was the amelioration of landed

property, and the augmentation of its produce; on which he propoſed to form the principal eſtabliſhment of the revenues of the ſtate. This tax, under the name of the *impôt-foncier*, or land-tax, forms at preſent half the revenue of the French republic. In purſuance of this ſyſtem, he was under the neceſſity of uſing meaſures which thwarted the intereſts of many and powerful individuals: but, as he manifeſted a diſintereſtedneſs in this reform which turned to the advantage of the public, and to the immediate relief of the lower claſſes, the enthuſiaſm of the nation ſeconded his projects, and procured him the title, which he has ever ſince retained, of the *Virtuous Miniſter*.

Thus ſupported, M. Turgot undertook the total regeneration of the ſtate. Every reform, which he made or propoſed, created him hoſts of enemies: for, as every reform diminiſhed the power or the privileges of individuals in favor of the people, thoſe who ſuffered were of courſe

loud in their exclamations. To thoſe clamours he had to oppoſe the benedictions of the people, whom he relieved or enriched: the approbation of the king ſupported him againſt the calumnies and menaces of the court; nor does it appear that he was inſenſible to the requitals of the Muſe, who, in the perſon of the philoſopher of Ferney, contributed

"To ſpread his name o'er lands, and ſeas,
"Whatever clime the ſun's bright circle warms!"

Voltaire, who ſo often had proſtituted his pen to vain eulogium on the great, addreſſed himſelf, at the cloſe of his life, to the good. The following are the verſes which he ſent to M. Turgot:

"On m'accuſe d'avoir chanté
"Maupeou, Terray—à ma patrie
"Odieux pour l'eternité:
"Alors je pris la liberté
"D'abuſer de la poéſie;
"J'employai le pinceau brillant
"De l'art et de la flatterie.
"Mais aujourd'hui, lorſque je crie

" Preſque des bords du monument
" Où je vais dépoſer ma vie,
" Que mon pays a ſon Titus,
" Son Sully, ſon ſecond Turenne,
" Que les beaux arts et les vertus
" Annoncent ſa gloire prochaine ;
" Mes accens n'en impoſent plus,
" Et j'ai pris ma voix naturelle :
" C'eſt pour le coup que tout eſt bien ;
" Et le poëte, au vrai fidèle,
" N'eſt plus qu'un ſimple hiſtorien."

The approbation of M. de Voltaire was, however, no evidence of extraordinary merit in the miniſter, ſince the poet had been almoſt always laviſh of his praiſes towards men in power. But M. Turgot, it is ſaid, had ſome peculiar claims to his attention ; ſince, amidſt the reforms meditated, was one in which this philoſophic writer had laboured the greater part of his life. M. Turgot, though once a profeſſed believer in the truths of Chriſtianity, is repreſented as having become ſceptical as he advanced in years. Theſe anti-religious diſpoſitions were regarded by the clergy as not only dangerous in a miniſter, but peculiarly ſo in an

œconomical miniſter of finance. This heretical pravity might have been tolerated, had it been confined to ſpeculative doctrines: but the alarm for the ſafety of the church and ſtate became general, among the clergy at leaſt, when they heard of ſuch œconomical projects as that of changing the place of royal conſecration from Rheims to Paris, of diſlodging the holy phial brought from heaven by the pigeon, of altering a few phraſes of the coronation-oath, which appeared more favorable to the prieſthood than the laity, and omitting the obligation of exterminating heretics.

It does not appear, at firſt ſight, to common obſervers, nor even after longer reflection can it be well conjectured, what alliance ſubſiſts between operations of finance, and innovations in matters of faith. The clergy, who, from education and habit, are in general men of deeper reflection and longer foreſight than other men, and whoſe ſcent of hereſy is conſe-

quently more ſagacious, ſaw the neceſſary connexion that exiſted between the pigeon of Rheims, the baptiſm of Clovis, with other matters of like religious obſervance, and the due maintenance of the majeſty of the church. They felt that the financial ſpeculation, which could extend itſelf to the diſtant detail of an œconomical conſecration, might perchance, in the intermediary ſpace, fix its eyes on their benefices, abbeys, tythes, eccleſiaſtical foreſts, and other immenſe domains; and that, till the reform of Rheims took place, which was to ſave ſo much future expenſe to the ſtate, the miniſter might amuſe himſelf in computing what advantages might be gained to the people at preſent, in making œconomical experiments on the property of the church. As the conſtituted guardians of the eccleſiaſtical weal, the clergy were founded in the remonſtrances which they made at this period, and of which we may ſpeak more fully hereafter. Some of this order there were, no doubt, who deemed of the

holy pigeon, and the baptiſm of Clovis, as M. Turgot, M. Maleſherbes, and Lewis the Sixteenth, at the time had deemed: but thoſe were of that claſs of philoſophers who were called, at the time, the incredulous or infidel clergy. The reſt thought more wiſely, if not more conſcientiouſly, and reaſoned like the ſenator Craſſus, mentioned by Livy, who reproached his caſt with their indifference to the peckings of the holy chicken, the obſervance of which belonged excluſively to the patrician order, and had raiſed their commonwealth to the higheſt pitch of greatneſs.

To enter into any further detail of the reforms of M. Turgot would be unneceſſary, ſince they have appeared before the public in various ways, and have been carried into their full effect by the revolution. The king's letter is ſo much the more intereſting, as it paints his real ſentiments with reſpect to M. Turgot and his operations. What the particular memo-

rial is, to which the king alludes, we know not: but it appears that it was ſome great project of future reform, which the miniſter meditated. While the king remained in theſe ſentiments, he merited, no doubt, the title of Titus, which the poet beſtowed on him: but we have only to turn to the following letter, to ſee what was the fate of our modern Sully.

LETTRE VI.

A M. DE MALESHERBES.

Verſailles, 2 Mai, 1776.

TURGOT, mon cher Maleſherbes, ne convient plus à la place qu'il occupe : il eſt trop entier, même dans le bien qu'il croit faire. Le deſpotiſme, à ce que je vois, n'eſt bon à rien, dût-il forcer un grand peuple à être heureux. Le parlement, la nobleſſe, Maurepas ſurtout, qui m'aime véritablement, demandent ſa retraite ; et je viens de la ſigner. Je ne vois pas pourquoi cet acte de rigueur, néceſſaire à la tranquillité publique, entraînerait votre démiſſion : vous avez les talens de Turgot, mais non l'aſpérité de ſon caractère ; vous êtes tolérant, ſans être faible ; et le bien que vous déſeſpérez de faire aujourd'hui, vouz avez la ſageſſe de le renvoyer au lendemain.

Reſtez au miniſtère, mon cher Malesherbes. Votre franchiſe m'eſt néceſſaire encore; et vous la devez à votre ami, ſi vous ne la devez pas à votre roi.

LOUIS.

LETTER VI.

(*Translation.*)

TO M. DE MALESHERBES.

Verſailles, May 2, 1776.

TURGOT, my dear Maleſherbes, is no longer fit for the place he occupies: he is too pertinacious, even in the good he wiſhes to do. Deſpotiſm, in my opinion, is good for nothing, even when it would force a great people to be happy. The parliament, the nobility, and, above all, Maurepas, who loves me ſincerely, demand his retreat; and I have juſt ſigned it. I do not ſee why this act of rigor, neceſſary for the public tranquillity, ſhould occaſion your reſignation. You poſſeſs Turgot's talents, without his aſperity of character: you are tolerant, without being weak; and the good which you deſpair

of accompliſhing to-day, you have the wiſdom to defer till to-morrow.

Remain in the miniſtry, my dear Maleſherbes. Your freedom of character is ſtill neceſſary to me; and it is a debt you owe to your friend, if not to your king.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE VIth LETTER.

M. TURGOT had now reached the end of his miniſterial career. He had ſucceeded in gaining enemies wherever he propoſed reforms; and, as his principal ſupport, next to the rectitude of his views, had been the approbation of the king, he had only to fall when this laſt ſtay bent under him.

Two or three days before the king pronounced the ſentence of diſmiſſion againſt him, M. Turgot obſerved to the monarch that this event muſt ſoon neceſſarily take place. He had already given Lewis ſome intimation on this ſubject in preceding letters; and, conſcious by what a feeble thread he hung, when it was on the king's favor and perſeverance,

he obſerved to him with ſomewhat of prophetic harſhneſs, that the fate of weak princes was that of Charles the Firſt of England, or of Charles the Ninth of France.

It is to M. de Maleſherbes that the king imparts his intention: it is to the friend and collegue of the miniſter he is about to diſgrace, that he brings the accuſation, "Turgot, my dear Maleſherbes, is,"—what?—an ambitious, inattentive, or prodigal miniſter?—no! he is too obſtinately perſevering in the good he would do—too inflexibly juſt! What a miniſter!—what an accuſation!—"Deſpotiſm," ſays the king, "is good for nothing, even when employed to force the people to be happy." This ſentiment, taken in the abſtract, is juſt, and even ſublime, when proceeding from the lips of a monarch: but the following ſentence of the king's letter furniſhes the commentary of the apophthegm, and the excuſe of the miniſter.

"The parliament, the nobility, Maurepas eſpecially, who loves me, demand his diſmiſſion; and I am going to ſign it." This was the diviſion againſt the miniſter: —in his favor were his inflexibility in good, the applauſes of the wiſe and virtuous, and the benedictions of the people. But this is a ſubject too ſerious for declamation: let us review, in an authentic document, this hoſt of enemies held up by the king againſt his miniſter; let us read the defence of this miniſter, not in apologies written by himſelf or his friends, but in the ſolemn and public acts of the monarch, confirming the great reforms which Turgot had projected.

This act is the anſwer of the king to the remonſtrances which the parliament made againſt the enregiſtering the edicts for the ſuppreſſion of the *jurandes*, (the privileges of the companies of arts and trades,) of the *corvées*, and for the generaliſation of the *taille*, or perſonal tax. This anſwer was given about ſix weeks

previous to the diſmiſſion of M. Turgot.

"I have examined," ſays the king, "with great attention, the remonſtrances of my parliament: they contain nothing which has not been foreſeen, and maturely digeſted, before I decided on ſending my edicts and declarations. But my parliament ought to have ſeen that all theſe laws have for their object to ſecure abundance in my good city of Paris, to releaſe commerce from reſtrictions that were injurious to its proſperity, and to provide relief for ſuch of my ſubjects as ſubſiſt only by their manual labour, and who are the moſt expoſed to indigence. My intention is not to confound rank, nor to deprive the nobility of my kingdom of thoſe diſtinctions which it has acquired by its ſervices, which it has always enjoyed under the kings my predeceſſors, and which I will always maintain. There is no queſtion here of an humiliating impoſt (*taille*, or perſonal

tax), but a ſimple tax to which every one will think himſelf honored in contributing, ſince I myſelf have ſet the example in proportion to my domains. I am happy to believe that my parliament has been moved only by its zeal; for I can never ſuppoſe that it has any intention to withdraw itſelf from the ſubmiſſion which it owes me. But, now that I have myſelf explained the motives which engage me to perſiſt in my reſolution, I expect that it will no longer defer proceeding to the pure and ſimple enregiſtering of my edicts and declarations. It may reſt aſſured, that, if I hereafter find that any of the articles contain inconveniences which I have not been able to foreſee, my regard for my people will engage me to remedy them."

The parliament continuing refractory, the king a few days after held a bed of juſtice, in which he enregiſtered M. Turgot's edicts. "There are none," ſaid the king, "who love the people, but my-

ſelf and M. Turgot." The monarch at this time acted from no impulſe of enthuſiaſm: it was the reſult of calm, reflective deliberation. The parliament had remonſtrated: the nobility, the courtiers, the whole caſt of the privileged of every deſcription, the titled, and the rich, had put themſelves in inſurrection againſt the miniſter: the king had weighed their objections, had conſidered all the tendencies and bearings of M. Turgot's reforms, and yet ſtood ſtern with the miniſter againſt the tempeſt. This triumph was, however, but ſhort. The rock againſt which Turgot leaned, was at length undermined. "Maurepas eſpecially, who truly loves me," ſays the king, "demands his diſmiſſion." If a review of the former part of the adminiſtration of this miniſter favors the ſuppoſition that he acted ſincerely with reſpect to the reforms, though he was more moderate in his views than the miniſters whom he introduced to the king, M. de Maurepas, on further examination, appears to be nothing but the

mere courtier, and of a nature more designing and dangerous than it is commonly the misfortune of princes to find. Two years before this period, he had expelled Maupeou, and his parliament, the creatures of the crown to the loweſt dregs of ſervility, introducing a refractory parliament, and a reforming miniſtry. Theſe inſtruments were neceſſary for the conſolidation of his own power. Having gained the ambitioned aſcendency over the monarch, he now uſes his influence to defeat theſe new competitors for royal power; and, alarmed at the progreſs which liberal and philoſophical principles had made on the mind of the king, he checks at once the dangerous propenſity, and, with the authority of a Mentor, as he was titled, demands the miniſter's diſmiſſion.

Demand Turgot's diſmiſſion! The miniſter might indeed be diſmiſſed from the royal preſence: but could the recollection of his virtues, his acts of beneficence, his enlarged and noble projects, his great and

of accompliſhing to-day, you have the wiſdom to defer till to-morrow.

Remain in the miniſtry, my dear Maleſherbes. Your freedom of character is ſtill neceſſary to me; and it is a debt you owe to your friend, if not to your king.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE VIth LETTER.

M. TURGOT had now reached the end of his miniſterial career. He had ſucceeded in gaining enemies wherever he propoſed reforms; and, as his principal ſupport, next to the rectitude of his views, had been the approbation of the king, he had only to fall when this laſt ſtay bent under him.

Two or three days before the king pronounced the ſentence of diſmiſſion againſt him, M. Turgot obſerved to the monarch that this event muſt ſoon neceſſarily take place. He had already given Lewis ſome intimation on this ſubject in preceding letters; and, conſcious by what a feeble thread he hung, when it was on the king's favor and perſeverance,

he obſerved to him with ſomewhat of prophetic harſhneſs, that the fate of weak princes was that of Charles the Firſt of England, or of Charles the Ninth of France.

It is to M. de Maleſherbes that the king imparts his intention: it is to the friend and collegue of the miniſter he is about to diſgrace, that he brings the accuſation, "Turgot, my dear Maleſherbes, is,"—what?—an ambitious, inattentive, or prodigal miniſter?—no! he is too obſtinately perſevering in the good he would do—too inflexibly juſt! What a miniſter!—what an accuſation!—"Deſpotiſm," ſays the king, "is good for nothing, even when employed to force the people to be happy." This ſentiment, taken in the abſtract, is juſt, and even ſublime, when proceeding from the lips of a monarch: but the following ſentence of the king's letter furniſhes the commentary of the apophthegm, and the excuſe of the miniſter.

"The parliament, the nobility, Maurepas eſpecially, who loves me, demand his diſmiſſion; and I am going to ſign it." This was the diviſion againſt the miniſter: —in his favor were his inflexibility in good, the applauſes of the wiſe and virtuous, and the benedictions of the people. But this is a ſubject too ſerious for declamation: let us review, in an authentic document, this hoſt of enemies held up by the king againſt his miniſter; let us read the defence of this miniſter, not in apologies written by himſelf or his friends, but in the ſolemn and public acts of the monarch, confirming the great reforms which Turgot had projected.

This act is the anſwer of the king to the remonſtrances which the parliament made againſt the enregiſtering the edicts for the ſuppreſſion of the *jurandes*, (the privileges of the companies of arts and trades,) of the *corvées*, and for the generaliſation of the *taille*, or perſonal tax. This anſwer was given about ſix weeks

previous to the diſmiſſion of M. Turgot.

"I have examined," ſays the king, "with great attention, the remonſtrances of my parliament: they contain nothing which has not been foreſeen, and maturely digeſted, before I decided on ſending my edicts and declarations. But my parliament ought to have ſeen that all theſe laws have for their object to ſecure abundance in my good city of Paris, to releaſe commerce from reſtrictions that were injurious to its proſperity, and to provide relief for ſuch of my ſubjects as ſubſiſt only by their manual labour, and who are the moſt expoſed to indigence. My intention is not to confound rank, nor to deprive the nobility of my kingdom of thoſe diſtinctions which it has acquired by its ſervices, which it has always enjoyed under the kings my predeceſſors, and which I will always maintain. There is no queſtion here of an humiliating impoſt (*taille*, or perſonal

tax), but a ſimple tax to which every one will think himſelf honored in contributing, ſince I myſelf have ſet the example in proportion to my domains. I am happy to believe that my parliament has been moved only by its zeal; for I can never ſuppoſe that it has any intention to withdraw itſelf from the ſubmiſſion which it owes me. But, now that I have myſelf explained the motives which engage me to perſiſt in my reſolution, I expect that it will no longer defer proceeding to the pure and ſimple enregiſtering of my edicts and declarations. It may reſt aſſured, that, if I hereafter find that any of the articles contain inconveniences which I have not been able to foreſee, my regard for my people will engage me to remedy them."

The parliament continuing refractory, the king a few days after held a bed of juſtice, in which he enregiſtered M. Turgot's edicts. "There are none," ſaid the king, "who love the people, but my-

OBSERVATIONS ON THE VIIth LETTER.

IF any quality of Lewis the Sixteenth could equal his inconſtancy and weakneſs, it was his ſimplicity, in ſuppoſing that M. de Maleſherbes would remain in the miniſtry after the diſmiſſion of M. Turgot. At the cloſe of the laſt letter, the king, apologiſing for this act of rigor againſt M. Turgot, endeavours to retain M. de Malesherbes, by repreſenting to him that he poſſeſſed the talents of his friend without his aſperity, and could wait patiently till the morrow, for the good he could not effect in the day. But M. de Maleſherbes knew well the inſtability of the ground on which he ſtood; nor could he, as a man of honor, remain in office, when his friend was expelled; and not only his friend, but the principles alſo on which he acted, and which formed the baſis of their common aſſociation.

M. de Malesherbes did not hesitate: his resignation instantly followed the dismission of M. Turgot. It appears from this letter, that, in the interval, which was only five days, he had undergone much solicitation on the part of the king, since his steadiness or refusal is characterised by obstinacy. The king endeavours to win him over by complaisant allusions, and talks of Henry the Fourth, and Sully. Whatever resemblance might exist between himself and Sully, Malesherbes must have felt how great was the distance, in some points at least, between Lewis the Sixteenth and his illustrious ancestor. He felt also, that, if he was, as the king assures him, too selfish in his virtue, he was not worthy of a better fate than his friend, whom the monareh had just characterised as being too "inflexible in his wish of doing good." M. de Malesherbes, with all his zeal in the cause of the people, and his personal attachment to the king, an attachment which the event proved to be sincere, would not dis-

honor himſelf in the eyes of his country and of poſterity, by continuing to hold his place. He diſdained to be the inſtrument of an intriguing, hypocritical miniſter, and refuſed to yield to the king's ſolicitations. M. de Maurepas had now gained ſo great an aſcendency over Lewis, that it became vain to hope that any other counſels would be followed than ſuch as this miniſter ſuggeſted, eſpecially after the fatal influence which he had exerted in the diſmiſſion of his late collegue.

LETTRE VIII.

A M. DE MAUREPAS.

ON veut le renvoi de M. de St. Germain. Vous vous plaignez vous-même, mon cher Maurepas, des innovations et des réformes que ſon zèle pour mon ſervice lui a fait faire. J'étais perſuadé que ces réformes et ces innovations étaient utiles. Dans mon conſeil d'état j'ai ſouvent entendu avec intérêt la lecture de ſes mémoires: ils me paraiſſaient dictés par la ſageſſe, l'amour de l'ordre et de l'économie. St. Germain me plaiſait: mais on ſe ligue contre lui: ſes ennemis ont juré ſa perte: il a perdu votre confiance, mon cher Maurepas: il ne pourrait plus faire le bien: je ſuis forcé de l'éloigner: mais je vous avoue que ſon mémoire a fait ſur moi la plus vive impreſſion. C'eſt à regret que je lui donne un ſucceſſeur. Je de-

vrais peut-être, en cette circonſtance, réſiſter à mon conſeil: mais je dois, quoique roi, faire céder mon opinion à celle de la majorité; et j'ai ſigné.

LOUIS.

LETTER VIII.

(Tranſlation.)

TO M. DE MAUREPAS.

THE removal of M. de St. Germain is generally wiſhed for; and you yourſelf, my dear Maurepas, complain of the innovations and reforms which his zeal for my ſervice led him to introduce. I was perſuaded that theſe reforms and innovations were uſeful, and, in my council of ſtate, have often liſtened with intereſt to his memorials, which appeared to me to be dictated by wiſdom, the love of order and œconomy. St. Germain was agreeable to me: but there is a league formed againſt him: his enemies have ſworn his deſtruction: he has loſt your confidence, my dear Maurepas: he could therefore no longer do good, and I am compelled to

remove him; but I acknowledge that his memorials have left a ſtrong impreſſion on my mind; and I name his ſucceſſor with regret. Perhaps I ought, on this occaſion, to reſiſt the deciſions of my council: but I am obliged, although a king, to yield my own opinion to that of the majority; and I have ſigned.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE VIIIth LETTER.

HAD we not received ſufficient evidence of the inſtability of the king's reſolutions, and of the ſlight texture of his moral courage, this letter would furniſh another ſtriking example. M. de St. Germain was not only perſonally agreeable to Lewis the Sixteenth, but he ſeems, while he is expelling him from his counſels, to take pleaſure in making his eulogium. The king was perſuaded that theſe reforms were uſeful: the memorials of the miniſter were dictated by wiſdom, the love of order and œconomy: they had made the moſt lively impreſſion on his mind: "but," ſays the king with great ſimplicity, "his enemies have ſworn his ruin. You yourſelf, my dear Maurepas, have complained of the innovations and

reforms which his zeal for my ſervice has led him to make."

That the enemies of wiſdom, of the love of order and œconomy, ſhould have ſworn the ruin of a reforming miniſter, was perfectly natural: that the wily Mentor ſhould wiſh to check the aſcendency which this upright miniſter had gained over the mind of his royal pupil, is alſo very reaſonable: theſe men acted in conformity to their inſtinct. But who, in reviewing this hiſtory of diſmiſſals, the ſecret cauſes of which are laid open in this correſpondence, can avoid deploring the fate of the king, placed, like Medea, between the good and the evil; appreciating, with all the feelings of honor and integrity which belong to virtuous men, the one, and yet, though armed with power to purſue it, ſubmitting and reſolving to conſummate the other? And who, raiſing his mind above the intrigues of courts, and the littleneſs of individuals, but muſt mourn over the fate of nations

intruſted to ſuch paraſites, and ſuch princes? The king is convinced, he tells his favorite, that the enemies of the miniſter are the enemies of his plans of doing good: and whom does he drive from his preſence? the rapacious and prodigal banditti that form the majority of his counſels? No; it is the man of integrity and worth, the miniſter of his choice, who enjoys and merits all his conſideration and eſteem! I believe it is generally admitted that M. de St. Germain's plans of reform did not deſerve all the approbation which the monarch has beſtowed on them, and that his retreat from miniſtry was not marked with that nobleneſs and independence of character which diſtinguiſhed his two other colleagues. The king, however, had the fulleſt impreſſion of the utility of theſe plans, the greateſt perſonal confidence in his miniſter's adminiſtration: but, as this miniſter had loſt the confidence of his council and courtiers, he ſentences him to the impoſſibility of any longer doing good.

The adminiſtration of thoſe three miniſters is the moſt important epocha of the reign of Lewis the Sixteenth, till the revolution. Of that event thoſe men were the preſiding cauſes; and if the good intentions of the king had been ſeconded by firmneſs of character, the reformation of abuſes, and the gradual introduction of civil and political liberty, would have ſpared his country many of the calamities which it has ſuffered from the revolution, and himſelf the dreadful cataſtrophe by which at length he fell.

LETTRE IX.

A M. DE FORBONOIS.

Ce 16 Janvier, 1778.

SOUS le gouvernement des rois qui m'ont précédé, Monſieur, des circonſtances malheureuſes et imprévues ont formé la dette publique. J'ai cherché tous les moyens de l'éteindre: j'ai conſulté les hommes qui joignèrent la théorie à la pratique. J'ai confié les places adminiſtratives en cette partie aux financiers les plus habiles: ils ne m'ont offert pour remède que des emprunts, des impôts, ou la banqueroute, des projets déſaſtreux de banque, ou des actes frauduleux. Ruiner l'état ou preſſurer le peuple, voilà tout leur ſecret. Ce n'eſt pas ainſi que Sully acquittait les dettes contractées par le Bon Henry après une guerre longue et ſanglante, lorſque les forfaits de la Ligue, la

haine des catholiques, et la méfiance des proteſtans, ſemblèrent ôter toute confiance. Sully ne ſe borna point à des bizarres ſpéculations : il mépriſait les eſprits ſyſtématiques. Ce n'eſt que dans l'économie qu'il trouvait des reſſources. Exciter l'induſtrie, protéger l'agriculture, encourager le commerce, voilà toute ſa politique, toutes ſes reſſources, et tous ſes moyens financiers. Je ne m'étonne plus ſi mon ayeul, le grand Henry, que mon cœur chérit et révère, avait acquis, par les ſervices de cet excellent miniſtre, le cœur des Français. Henry était adoré : et cependant j'oſe vous aſſurer qu'il ne pouvait pas aimer le peuple d'un amour plus tendre que celui que je porte à tous mes ſujets. M. de Forbonois ſera pour moi le Sully d'Henry. Depuis quarante ans vous parcourez une carrière d'inſtruction régénératrice : depuis quarante ans vous avez occupé des places où votre noble déſintéreſſement a fait époque : vous avez prouvé que vos connaiſſances étaient réelles, que vos talens n'empruntèrent

rien des faux ſyſtèmes : oſez entreprendre et exécuter ; ſoyez le bienfaiteur de la nation, le guide de nos financiers, le conſeil de votre roi : ſauvez l'etat ; venez accepter la place dont vous êtes digne.

LOUIS.

LETTER IX.

(Translation.)

TO M. DE FORBONOIS.

January 16, 1778.

DURING the government of the kings my predeceſſors, Sir, unhappy and unforeſeen circumſtances formed the public debt, which I have tried every means of liquidating, and on which I have conſulted perſons who joined theory to practice. I have confided the places of this part of the adminiſtration to the moſt able financiers; and they have preſented me with no other remedies, than loans, taxes, bankruptcy, diſaſtrous projects of banking, or fraudulent acts. To ruin the ſtate, or oppreſs the people, ſeems to be the whole of their ſecret. It was not thus that Sully acquitted the

debts contracted by the good Henry during a long and bloody war; when the crimes of the League, the hatred of the catholics, and the miſtruſt of the proteſtants, ſeemed to have deſtroyed all confidence. Sully did not confine himſelf to excentric ſpeculations; he deſpiſed the ſpirit of ſyſtems, and found his reſources in œconomy alone. The whole of his policy, reſources, and plans of finance, conſiſted in promoting induſtry, protecting agriculture, and encouraging commerce. I am no longer ſurpriſed that my anceſtor, the great Henry, whom my heart cheriſhes and reveres, obtained, from the ſervices of this excellent miniſter, the affections of the French. Henry was adored: and yet I dare affirm that he did not love his people with a more tender attachment than that which I bear towards my ſubjects. M. de Forbonois ſhall be to me what Sully was in the age of Henry. During forty years you have run a career of regenerating inſtruction: during forty years you have filled places

in which your noble diſintereſtedneſs forms a new epocha: you have given proofs that your knowledge was ſolid, and that your talents borrowed nothing from falſe ſyſtems. Venture to undertake and execute: be the benefactor of the nation, the guide of our financiers, the counſellor of your king; and ſave the ſtate by haſtening to accept functions of which you are worthy.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE IXth LETTER.

AFTER diſmiſſing thoſe miniſters who had ſtemmed the torrent of ſtate-prodigality, and found a remedy for thoſe circumſtances to which the king gives the miſnomer of unforeſeen and unfortunate; it is not aſtoniſhing, that, whatever were his good intentions and deſire of œconomy, he found himſelf perplexed and unhappy. The king complains that the remedies at preſent adminiſtered (M. Necker was then miniſter) were loans, taxes, bankruptcy. One of M. Turgot's conditions on entering into office was, no loans, no more taxes, no bankruptcy.

The ſucceſſors of Meſſ. Maleſherbes and Turgot, finding the plans of thoſe revolutionary miniſters impracticable in their own hands, very modeſtly returned

to the old routine; and the reputation of trade-companies, *corvées*, the *taille*, and other taxes of the like excluſive nature, was duly rehabilitated. An exception muſt, however, be made in favor of M. Necker, who inherited the virtuous diſpoſitions of his predeceſſors, but who, finding, like the reſt of his collegues, that it was impoſſible to go on without either loans or taxes, appears, in the choice of evils, to have taken the former, and to have converted the treaſury of the ſtate into a vaſt banking-houſe.

It is difficult to know what particular embarraſſment the king was under when he addreſſed this letter to M. de Forbonois: but he ſeems to have diſcovered, that, if his lately diſcarded miniſters were too obſtinate and perſevering in their deſire of doing good, the whole ſecret of the preſent was to ruin the ſtate, and oppreſs the people. Whatever may have been the ſecret of his collegues, hiſtory will do M. Necker the juſtice to acknowledge that ſuch was not his ſecret, or intention.

The king appears to have fallen into a great error on this ſubject, and to have miſtaken the remedy for the diſeaſe. The evil was not in loans or taxes, but in the debt which occaſioned them; a circumſtance, which was ſo far from being unforeſeen, however unfortunate, that it was an object always preſſing on the ſight. It was the cauſe of this calamity that M. Turgot had been ſo ſolicitous to remove, by the introduction of a ſevere œconomy in every department. This miniſter had to contend againſt dilapidations and prodigality of every kind, to curb the extravagance of the queen and the royal brothers, to wreſt the treaſury from the hands of favorites, to become, in ſhort, the Cerberus of the ſtate. This, it muſt be admitted, was no galant way of ſaving the finances of the country, but was at the ſame time the only mode that was left.

The king muſt alſo have been miſtaken when he aſſerts that he had confided the

department of the finance to the moſt dextrous adminiſtrators, ſince, according to his own confeſſion, their plans tended to nothing but ruin and oppreſſion. While he invoked M. de Forbonois to be his Sully, the king had not conſidered the diſtance between himſelf and Henry the Fourth. Every candid mind will, however, do the king the juſtice he claims in the parallel which he draws, and will perhaps admit that his diſpoſition to do good might not be inferior to that illuſtrious anceſtor: but ſimple diſpoſition is a ſterile quality; he wanted that active benevolence which ſo much diſtinguiſhed Henry; that perſeverance and imperturbability in the execution, which are ſo eſſential in the reformation of abuſes. The few letters we have tranſcribed are ſufficient evidences, how ſingularly he was diſqualified for the poſt in which he was placed, and the taſk he had undertaken.

LETTRE X.

A M. LE DUC DE CHARON.

16 Mai, 1778.

VOUS paſſez votre vie, mon couſin, à fonder des établiſſemens utiles : non ſeulement votre ſollicitude ſe partage pour les arts, mais elle va au devant de ceux qui les cultivent. C'eſt prouver par vos actions, mon couſin, que vous avez hérité de cet amour chevalereſque que le bon Sully avait pour tous les Français. Comme vous, j'aime à encourager les malheureux : c'eſt à ce titre que je veux fonder deux places à l'école de deſſein, que je deſtine pour des jeunes perſonnes dont les diſpoſitions ſeront prononcées. Vous ſerez libre de me déſigner celles qui mériteront le plus d'être admiſes au concours.

Je vous renouvelle avec grand plaiſir, mon couſin, les ſentimens d'eſtime particulière que j'ai pour vous.

LOUIS.

LETTER X.

(Tranſlation.)

TO THE DUKE OF CHARON.

May 16th, 1778.

YOU ſpend your life, my couſin, in forming uſeful eſtabliſhments; and your ſolicitude extends, not only to the arts themſelves, but to thoſe who cultivate them. Your actions prove that you inherit that romantic affection which the good Sully felt for all Frenchmen. Like you, I love to encourage the unfortunate, and, with this view, mean to found two places at the academy of drawing, deſtined for ſuch young perſons as ſhall diſcover a decided talent for that art. I leave to your choice the nomination of thoſe who merit beſt to be admitted as candidates.

I reiterate with infinite pleaſure, my couſin, the particular ſentiments of eſteem I bear you.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE Xth LETTER.

THIS letter forms the eulogium both of the perſon by whom it was written, and the perſon to whom it was addreſſed; and, although it contains little elſe than a compliment to the duke of Charon, diſcovers a diſpoſition for genuine benevolence in the king, which does honor to his heart. The name of Sully ſo frequently recurs in his private correſpondence, that it appears to have been the character in the hiſtory of his country which he had moſt ſtudied, and on which he dwelt with particular complacency. Amidſt the ſtruggle of factions, and the entanglements of parties, the mind is ſoothed in repoſing on incidents ſuch as theſe; and a wiſh involuntarily ariſes, that the writer of ſuch a letter had been deſtined by fortune to thoſe occupations for which he ſo juſtly praiſes his beneficent couſin.

LETTRE XI.

LETTRE DE M. NECKER A LOUIS XVI, en lui envoyant le Traité de l'Adminiſtration des Finances.

——— 1782.

SIRE,

C'EST avec une reſpectueuſe timidité, que je prends la liberté de faire hommage à V. M. du travail auquel je me ſuis livré pendant ma retraite. Je ne ſavais, en l'entreprenant, ſi je le rendrais jamais public; et quand il a été fait, de grands motifs ont déterminé mon incertitude. Je ſupplie Votre Majeſté de ne porter de jugement ſur cet ouvrage, qu'après l'avoir lu tout entier: c'eſt dans ſa manière calme et ſupérieure de juger les hommes et les choſes, que je mets ma confiance; car je n'ai point laiſſé d'amis autour d'elle, quoiqu'il m'eût été bien facile d'en

faire. Loin de tout, et n'aſpirant plus à rien, c'eſt par un ſentiment pur et digne des grandes qualités de Votre Majeſté, que je déſire ardemment ſon approbation; et c'eſt avec un cœur pénétré de ſon infinie bonté, que j'oſe au moins ſolliciter ſon indulgence. Je mets aux pieds de V. M. les ſentimens profonds d'amour et de reſpect pour ſa perſonne, qui me ſuivront juſqu'au tombeau, et qui s'uniſſent à tous ceux que je dois comme étant de ſa Majeſté le plus humble et le plus obéiſſant ſerviteur.

NECKER.

Note.—Le roi accueillit mal et la lettre de M. Necker, et ſon mémoire. Voici la lettre qu'il adreſſa à M. de Vergennes en cette circonſtance.

LETTER XI.

(*Tranſlation.*)

M. NECKER TO LEWIS THE SIXTEENTH, ſent with his Treatiſe on the Adminiſtration of the Finances.

——— 1782.

SIRE,

WITH reſpectful timidity, I take the liberty of preſenting, as a homage to your Majeſty, a work which I have written during my retreat. When I undertook this taſk, I was doubtful if I ſhould ever render it public; and, ſince it has been finiſhed, powerful motives have overcome my indeciſion. I intreat your Majeſty will paſs no judgement on this performance, till you have peruſed the whole. In your calm and ſuperior manner of judging men and things, I place my confidence: for I have left no friends around

your royal perſon, although they might with eaſe have been obtained. Far from all, and having no further pretenſions to any thing, I deſire ardently your Majeſty's approbation, from a ſentiment pure, and worthy of your great qualities; and, with a heart penetrated by your goodneſs, I preſume at leaſt to ſolicit your indulgence. I lay at your Majeſty's feet thoſe ſentiments of profound affection and reſpect, which will follow me to the tomb, and which are blended with thoſe I owe to your Majeſty, as being the moſt humble and moſt obedient of your Majeſty's ſervants.

NECKER.

Note.—The king received coldly M. Necker's letter, and his work, and on this occaſion addreſſed the following letter to M. de Vergennes.

LETTRE XII.

A M. DE VERGENNES.

VOUS recevrez, ci-joint, Monſieur, l'ouvrage que j'ai ſeulement parcouru, et où j'ai mis, ça et là, quelques notes, mais ſans ſuite. En tout état de cauſe, il me ſemble que, s'il avait les meilleures intentions poſſibles, il aurait adreſſé l'ouvrage manuſcrit à ſon ſucceſſeur, au lieu de l'envoyer au public. Mais il aura voulu nourrir ſon parti; et, parcequ'il aura prévu mes intentions, il aura pris les devants, en prévenant les uſages qui enpermettent la publication. Vous verrez dans ſa lettre, qu'il fait le câlin. Il ſera inſtruit de l'effet de celle de ſa démiſſion.

LOUIS.

LETTER XII.

(*Tranſlation.*)

TO M. DE VERGENNES.

YOU will receive incloſed, Sir, the work, which I have looked over rapidly, and have occaſionally noted, but without order. In every point of view, it appears to me, that, if his intentions were of the pureſt nature poſſible, he would have addreſſed his manuſcript to his ſucceſſors, inſtead of making it public. But the truth is, he had a deſire to ſupport his party, and, foreſeeing my intentions, took the ſtart of me, and anticipated on the forms in uſe, which permit the publication. You will perceive by his letter, that he fawns. He will ſoon ſee the effect produced by that in which he announced to me his diſmiſſion.

LEWIS.

LETTRE XIII.

A M. DE VERGENNES.

23 Mai, 1783.

JE ne ſais pas ſi je commets une indiſcrétion, Monſieur : mais ma confiance en vous m'engage à ne vous rien cacher. M. Dangivillier m'a envoyé le billet, ſans me dire ſi c'était de mon aveu ou non. Il eſt vrai que la reine me demanda, ſur le mauvais état de la ſanté de M. Necker, qu'il pût venir paſſer quelque tems auprès de Paris, pour voir des médecins. Je le lui ai accordé, à condition qu'il ne viendrait pas à Paris, et qu'il verrait très peu de monde. Je vous confierai qu'avant de me la demander, elle m'avait demandé s'il n'y avait pas d'opération de finances prochaine ; et elle m'a dit qu'elle ne m'aurait pas fait la demande, s'il devait y en avoir. En tout elle me parut, comme

je le ſavais, très peu attachée à la perſonne de M. Necker. Je vous avouerai que, m'y étant mal pris cet hiver, l'occaſion n'était plus la même, et que je ne vois que peu de différence entre une province peu eloignée et une campagne. Lyon était peut-être pris, à cauſe des *agioteurs*; j'ai penſé ainſi qu'en montrant de l'indifférence à ſon perſonel, cela lui donnerait moins de célébrité. Ce n'eſt pas pourtant que je veuille le perdre de vue, ni ſes amis. J'envoyai chercher M. de Caſtries, après que la reine m'eût demandé la permiſſion: je lui dis ce que j'avais dit à la reine; et j'ajoutai qu'il devait ſe ſouvenir, il y a deux ans, qu'au départ de M. D'Ormeſſon, je lui avais mandé formellement que M. Necker, ni ſes amis, ne devaient pas ſonger qu'il rentrât jamais en place; que ſi M. Necker ſe tenait tranquille, et que ſes amis ne feraient pas parler de lui, je le laiſſerais tranquille; mais que ſi, par rapport à lui, il s'élevait des bruits, et qu'il ſe fît des choſes contraires aux opérations du gouvernement,

ce ſerait moi qui me croirais attaqué, et qu'alors je le renverrais à Génève et qu'il ne reviendrait jamais plus en France. Je laiſſe à votre ſageſſe à communiquer ce que vous voudrez de cela au contrôleur général. Je comptais lui en parler moi-même jeudi ; mais il ſerait peut-être trop tard. J'ai compté ſur ſa diſcrétion ſur les particularités qui y ſont contenues : il peut dire que le perſonnel de M. Necker lui eſt indifférent, et que, comptant ſur mes bontés et ſur celles de la reine, il ne craint rien ; mais ſurtout qu'il prenne garde à ſes amis vrais ou faux. Tant qu'il ne s'occupera que de la choſe publique, il doit être tranquille. Je ne veux finir cette lettre ſans vous rappeler que le (20) (10) Mai eſt paſſé. J'eſpère qu'il s'en paſſera encore comme celui-ci.

Signé, Louis.

LETTER XIII.

(Tranſlation.)

TO M. DE VERGENNES.

May 23, 1783.

I KNOW not if I commit an indiſcretion: but my confidence leads me to leave nothing concealed from you. M. Dangivilliers ſent me the note, without informing me whether or no it had received my approbation. The queen, it is true, requeſted that M. Necker might have permiſſion, on account of his bad ſtate of health, to paſs ſome time near Paris, in order to conſult phyſicians. I conſented, on condition that he ſhould not come to Paris, and ſhould ſee few people. I muſt alſo obſerve to you that the queen had previouſly enquired whether any operations of finances were about to take place,

and told me, that, had that been the caſe, ſhe would not have made the requeſt: and, upon the whole, ſhe appeared to me, as I already knew, very little attached to M. Necker. I will acknowledge to you, that, not having acted with ſufficient addreſs this winter, the occaſion was no longer the ſame; and I ſee little difference between a neighbouring province, and a country-ſeat. Lyons was perhaps choſen on account of the ſtock-jobbers; and I imagined, that, by ſhewing indifference about him perſonally, I gave him leſs chance of celebrity. I do not, however, intend to loſe ſight of him, or his friends. I ſent for M. de Caſtries after the queen had demanded the permiſſion, and repeated to him what I had told the queen, adding that he might remember that two years ſince, at the departure of M. D'Ormeſſon, I had formerly declared to him that neither M. Necker nor his friends need ever entertain any thoughts of his being re-inſtated in his place; that, if M. Necker remained quiet, and his friends

abſtained from making him the public topic, I ſhould leave him in tranquillity; but that, if any noiſe were made on his account, or any means taken to thwart the operations of government, I ſhould conſider myſelf as being attacked, and ſhould then order him to go to Geneva, and never return to France. I leave to your wiſdom to communicate what you think proper of this to the controller-general. I purpoſed ſpeaking to him myſelf on Thurſday; but it would perhaps be too late. I depend upon his diſcretion reſpecting the details which are here contained; he may obſerve that M. Necker is perſonally an object of indifference to him, and that, relying on my goodneſs and that of the queen, he fears nothing. But, above all, let him beware of his friends, true or falſe. So long as he occupies himſelf only with public affairs, he may be tranquil. I cannot finiſh this letter without bringing to your recollection that the (20) (10) of May is paſſed: I hope it will again paſs like the laſt.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XIth, XIIth, AND XIIIth LETTERS.

AS the three preceding letters have already been preſented to the public, with very extenſive commentaries, it becomes unneceſſary to make further obſervations. M. Necker's adminiſtration fills ſo conſiderable a part of the hiſtory of the reign of Lewis the Sixteenth, that it would require almoſt as many volumes as that celebrated ex-miniſter has written, to ſtate all that might be ſaid on the occaſion. Theſe letters prove how formidable a power M. Necker had become, ſince the whole force of the French cabinet was ineffectual to cruſh him; and the king, in this inſtance, ſtood firm againſt the unanimous ſolicitations of his counſellors, who were anxious for a ſtriking diſplay of royal deſpotiſm.

LETTRE XIV.

A M. DE VERGENNES.

1783.

JE vous renvoie, Monſieur, avec les interceptions ordinaires, les dépêches d'Eſpagne que vous m'avez envoyées. Nous nous attendions bien à la mauvaiſe humeur du miniſtre Eſpagnol, quand il verrait que nous avions mieux vu que lui les événemens qui devaient arriver. Mais il eſt bien fâcheux que cela tourne au détriment de la choſe. M. D'Aranda eſt bien indiſcret de nous faire ſouffrir de ſa mauvaiſe humeur contre ſon pays. J'approuve le projet de M. Montmorin, que vous écriviez directement à M. Florida. Vous n'avez qu'à en dreſſer la lettre, que vous lirez dans un comité, où nous prendrons les déterminations qu'il faut ſur les opérations ultérieures.

J'ai vu la reine après qu'elle vous a vu. Elle m'a paru fort affectée du ſentiment d'inquiétude bien juſte ſur la guerre qui pourrait éclater, d'un moment à l'autre, entre deux rivaux ſi près l'un de l'autre. Elle m'a parlé auſſi de ce que vous n'aviez rien fait pour la prévenir. J'ai tâché de lui prouver que vous aviez fait ce qui était en vous, et que nous étions prêts à faire toutes les démarches amicales que la cour de Vienne pourrait nous ſuggérer. Mais en même tems je ne lui ai pas laiſſé ignorer le peu de fondement que je voyais aux acquiſitions de la maiſon d'Autriche, et que nous n'étions nullement obligés à la ſecourir pour les ſoutenir ; et de plus je l'ai bien aſſurée que le roi de Pruſſe ne pourrait pas nous détourner de l'alliance, et qu'on pouvait déſapprouver la conduite d'un allié, ſans ſe brouiller avec lui. Elle avait très peu reçu de l'empéreur et de l'impératrice, ainſi que de M. de Mercy. Tout cela eſt pour votre inſtruction, afin que vous puiſſiez parler le même langage. Je penſe bien, comme vous, qu'il ne faut

pas faire des démarches qui donneraient une ſanction à l'uſurpation de la cour de Vienne ; et je ne vois pas d'inconvénient à ce que vous avez dit à M. Mercy.

Louis.

LETTER XIV.

(*Translation.*)

TO M. DE VERGENNES.

1783.

I RETURN, ſir, with the ordinary interruptions, the diſpatches from Spain which you ſent me. We were well prepared for the ill humour of the Spaniſh miniſter, when he perceived that we had foreſeen better than himſelf the events which were likely to take place: but it is extremely unfortunate that this ſhould prove detrimental to the affair; and M. D'Aranda is highly indiſcreet in making us ſuffer on account of his ill humour againſt his country. I approve the project of M. Montmorin, that you ſhould write directly to M. Florida; and you may compoſe a letter for that purpoſe, which

you will read in a committee, where we will decide upon our future operations.

I ſaw the queen after ſhe had ſeen you; and ſhe appeared deeply affected by a ſentiment of uneaſineſs, well-founded, on the probability of the war which may break out between two rivals placed ſo near each other. She alſo ſpoke to me of your having done nothing to prevent it. I endeavoured to prove to her that you had done all you could, and that we were ready to adopt every friendly meaſure which the court of Vienna could ſuggeſt. At the ſame time I did not conceal from her, how little ſolid I conſidered the acquiſitions of the houſe of Auſtria, and that we were in no way obliged to lend our aid to maintain them. I moreover aſſured her that the king of Pruſſia had no power of turning us from the alliance; and that it was poſſible to diſapprove the conduct of an ally, without having any breach in conſequence. She has received very little from the emperor; the empreſs,

or M. de Mercy. Theſe things I mention for your information, and in order that you may ſpeak the ſame language. I think, with you, that we muſt take no meaſures which would give a ſanction to the uſurpations of the court of Vienna; and I ſee no impropriety in what you have ſaid to M. Mercy.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XIVth LETTER.

THIS letter, which has alſo been publiſhed, relates to the alliance between the cabinet of Verſailles and the houſe of Auſtria in 1783, and to the projects of Joſeph the Second on Bavaria, after the treaty at that epocha. Much importance has been attached to this letter, as diſplaying many facts unknown at that period, diſcovering the private ſentiments of the king reſpecting the conduct of his ally, and preſenting a faithful picture of the political relations between France and Vienna. But one of the moſt prominent characters of this letter is the aſcendency which the queen had now aſſumed in the cabinet. Ten years had elapſed in the ſtruggle between this princeſs and her huſband. Her paſſion for her houſe continued unabated: and it is curious to obſerve the ſecret intelligence between the

monarch and his miniſter, agreeing that in their communications with her they ſhould hold the ſame language.

Theſe circumſtances, which had once an important though ſecondary influence on the affairs of France, are not unworthy of the notice of the hiſtorian.

LETTRE XV.

A M. DE MALESHERBES.

13 Dec. 1786.

J'AIME et j'eſtime les hommes, mon cher Maleſherbes, qui, par des ouvrages utiles, prouvent qu'ils font un ſage emploi de leurs lumières : mais je n'encouragerai jamais, par aucun bienfait particulier, les productions qui tendent à la démoraliſation générale. Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Diderot, et leurs pareils, qui un inſtant ont obtenu mon admiration, que j'ai ſu priſer depuis, ont perverti la jeuneſſe qui lit avec ivreſſe, et la claſſe la plu nombreuſe des hommes qui liſent ſans reflexion. Sans doute, mon cher Maleſherbes, la liberté de la preſſe agrandit la ſphère des connaiſſances humaines. Sans doute il eſt à déſirer que les gens de lettres puiſſent manifeſter leurs penſées ſans licenciement d'une cen-

ſure quelconque : mais les hommes ſont toujours ſi au delà du point où la ſageſſe devrait les arrêter, qu'il faut non ſeulement une police ſévère pour les livres, mais encore une ſurveillance active envers ceux qui ſont chargés de les examiner, pour que les mauvais livres ayent le moins de publicité poſſible. Je le ſais, toute inquiſition eſt odieuſe : mais il faut un frein à la licence ; car, ſans ce moyen, la réligion et les mœurs perdraient bientôt de leur pouvoir, et la puiſſance royale de ce reſpect dont elle doit être toujours environnée. Nos philoſophes modernes n'ont exalté les bienfaits de la liberté, que pour jetter avec plus d'adreſſe dans les eſprits des ſemences de rébellion. Prenons y garde : nous aurons peut-être un jour à nous reprocher un peu trop d'indulgence pour les philoſophes, et pour leurs opinions. Je crains qu'ils ne ſéduiſent la jeuneſſe, et qu'ils ne préparent bien des troubles à cette génération qui les protège. Les remontrances du clergé ſont en partie fondées : je ne puis qu'ap-

plaudir à ſa prévoyance. Vous avez promis en mon nom, dans l'aſſemblée du clergé, de pourſuivre les mauvais livres, les livres impies. Nous tiendrons notre promeſſe, parceque la philoſophie trop audacieuſe du ſiècle a une arrière penſée, qu'elle corrompt la jeuneſſe, et tend à tout troubler, et à tout diviſer.

Louis.

LETTER XV.

(Tranſlation.)

TO M. DE MALESHERBES.

December 13, 1786.

I LOVE and eſteem thoſe men, my dear Maleſherbes, who prove, by the uſeful productions of their pen, that they employ their talents for worthy purpoſes: but I will never encourage, by any particular diſtinction, ſuch works as tend to a general corruption of morals. Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Diderot, and other writers of the ſame caſt, who obtained for a while my admiration, and whom I have ſince learned to appreciate, have perverted the young, who read with enthuſiaſm, and that claſs of ſociety, which is the moſt numerous, who read without reflexion. The libertyof the preſs, my dear Males-

herbes, no doubt enlarges the ſphere of human knowledge: it is certainly to be wiſhed that men of letters might have the privilege of publiſhing their thoughts without the obſtacle of any cenſure whatever: but men are ſo apt to wander beyond that point where wiſdom enjoins them to ſtop, that not only a ſevere police for books is neceſſary, but alſo a vigilant inſpection over thoſe who are commiſſioned to examine them, in order that noxious books may obtain as little notoriety as poſſible. I know that every kind of inquiſition is odious: but it is neceſſary to curb licentiouſneſs; ſince, if this be not done, religion and morals would ſoon loſe their influence, and regal authority that reſpect with which it ſhould always be accompanied. Our modern philoſophers have extolled the bleſſings of liberty, only to inſinuate more eaſily into the minds of men the ſeeds of rebellion. Let us beware: we ſhall perhaps one day have to reproach ourſelves with too much indulgence towards phi-

loſophers and their opinions. I fear they may ſeduce the young, and are preparing many troubles for the generation by which they are protected. The remonſtrances of the clergy are in part well-founded; and I cannot but applaud their foreſight. You have promiſed the aſſembly of the clergy, in my name, to proſecute hurtful and impious books; we will keep our word; for the too daring philoſophy of the age has a project in reſerve, while it corrupts youth, and tends towards general trouble and diſorder.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XVth LETTER.

AMONG the perſons who have taken a diſtinguiſhed part in the revolution, few are entitled to unqualified eſteem and veneration, like M. de Maleſherbes. M. Turgot's ſervices towards the public appear to have terminated with his miniſtry. M. de Maleſherbes, though long withdrawn from the buſineſs of the cabinet, occupies himſelf continually in giving his royal pupil inſtruction and counſel. This letter to M. de Maleſherbes appears to contain an anſwer to remonſtrances made by the ex-miniſter on ſome ſevere diſplay of authority againſt the philoſophical writers of the day; for which ſeverity the king juſtifies himſelf by a confeſſion of faith reſpecting philoſophers and their works.

This letter is extremely intereſting

under various points of view. It diſcovers a conſiderable portion of candour in the king, with reſpect to the propagation of liberal and rational ſentiments on the ſubject both of civil and religious liberty; and much may be allowed to the juſtice of his obſervations, when he deſcants on the abuſes which at the time were made of thoſe ineſtimable privileges. The king appears to have been once an admirer of the works of Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Diderot, and others: but who can diſapprove the temperate reſolution he had formed of with-holding encouragement from productions which, he believed, tended to the general corruption of the people? The apologiſts for thoſe writers will tell us, that, in combating deſpotiſm and ſuperſtition, the weapons they wielded were ſuch as were beſt fitted to produce effect, and that ridicule, according to the Roman poet, was ſtronger and more efficacious, than ſerious or ſevere argument. There are, no doubt, certain prejudices ſo inherent, that it requires the exerciſe of

every various faculty of the human mind to eradicate them: but it muſt be remembered that Milton, Locke, and Sidney, overthrew the deſpotiſm of the Stuarts, without the aid of ribaldry or licentiouſneſs; and that the illuſtrious reformers of the fifteenth century confirmed the morality of Europe, while they beat down the arrogant pretenſions of ſacerdotal and papal uſurpation. In the courſe of the preſent revolution, the philoſophers have miſtaken the true point: and, if the period ever arrive when deſpotiſm or ſuperſtition (which heaven avert!) ſhould regain their wonted aſcendency, part of the blame might juſtly be imputed to the philoſophers, who have contributed ſo greatly, as the king obſerves, towards the general demoraliſation.

What friend to a juſt and tempered freedom, to a manly and rational ſyſtem of religion, but muſt regard the miſapplied labors, the ignorant ardor, of ſuch ill adviſed advocates, not merely with

diſapprobation, but abhorrence? What cenſures do not theſe pretenders to reformation, in this and other countries, incur, when, by their intemperate ſallies, they create apologies for thoſe, who, ſhrinking from the gulf of annihilation, fall back for an aſylum into the arms of ſuperſtition and deſpotiſm! Againſt theſe enemies we might have hoped to ſtruggle with ſucceſs, and even to ſubdue them: but let us never ceaſe exclaiming with Jaffier,

——— "Save me from my friends!"

The homage, rendered by the king to the liberty of the preſs, does him honor, though it appears to have been, in this place, only an aſſent to the principle recorded in the ex-miniſter's remonſtrance. "Without doubt, my dear Maleſherbes," ſays the monarch, "the liberty of the preſs enlarges the ſphere of human knowledge: it were undoubtedly to be wiſhed that men of letters ſhould manifeſt their opinions without any permiſſion what-

ever." So far the king and his philoſophic inſtructor are agreed; but, though we may admit, with the former, that men are liable to go beyond the point where they ought to ſtop, however difficult it may be to ſtate what the true point of repoſe ſhould be, we are very ſure that the remedy which he propoſes is more dire than the diſeaſe.

The force of this truth immediately preſents itſelf to his mind. "I know," adds he, "that all inquiſition is odious: but the licentiouſneſs of the times calls for reſtraint." No problem in government has been more difficult to ſolve than that of the juſt meaſure of the liberty of the preſs. On this topic, both argument and declamation have been exhauſted; and, though this liberty has been recogniſed as one of the primordial and impreſcriptible rights of citizens, few governments, calling themſelves free, appear yet to have fixed it on its proper baſis. In the deſpotic ſtates of Europe, ſuch as France under the

monarchy, the principle was admitted as deſirable; but no reſtraint was thought of, except that of the police, an inquiſition which the perſon moſt intereſted in the reſtraint, regarded as odious. There are ſtates, however, where due reſpect is paid to this ineſtimable privilege; and, while the right of deciſion by juries is maintained, notwithſtanding the temporary interference of authority, the rights of citizens will remain inviolate.

Although the king inveighs againſt the infidelity and licentiouſneſs of modern philoſophers, we ſee him at the ſame time paſſing an eulogium on the foreſight of his clergy. This prætorian guard of deſpotiſm had long ſince juſtly taken the alarm. This provident and vigilant band had long ſeen Hannibal at the gates. The king reminds M. de Maleſherbes of the engagements he had taken in his name with this ſacred order, to proſecute immoral and impious publications. The miniſter, it appears, had been negligent

in this part of his duty: the king reminds him of his promiſe. But, before we condemn M. de Maleſherbes, it would be but reaſonable to take a ſlight ſurvey of ſome portions of the impiety which he was called on to repreſs, or puniſh. For thoſe, we muſt look into the indictment drawn up againſt philoſophy and philoſophers, contained in the acts of remonſtrance of the clergy.

Eleven years previous to the writing of this letter, the king appointed commiſſioners to hear thoſe complaints. "Infidelity," ſays the deputation, at the head of which was the archbiſhop of Toulouſe, "invades every age, every rank, every condition. A monſtrous atheiſm has become the prevailing opinion." An eloquent *tirade* againſt infidelity and atheiſm follows this denunciation; and many of the obſervations, made by theſe learned prelates reſpecting the fatal conſequences of this laxity of religious belief, were, no doubt, well founded. But, though this

impiety was pregnant with various miſchiefs, there was another aberration from the unity of the faith, which called for no leſs ſtrong repreſſion from the arm of the civil power. This foe to eſtabliſhed religion and ſocial order was Proteſtantiſm. "This ſect," adds the deputation, "overwhelmed for a long time paſt under the anathema of two powers, has dared again to raiſe its head. Intimidated heretofore by the ſeverity of the laws, checked by the unceaſing vigilance which watched all its projects, it ſought the ſolitude of the deſerts, and found its protection in the ſhades of night ..... but it now raiſes the ſtandard of ſchiſm; its preachers publiſh their fanatical maxims; they celebrate the holy communion, and the ſacrament of marriage."

"We do not, ſire, ſeek to enquire into the ſource of the liberty which the Proteſtants enjoy. Let your majeſty deign to inform yourſelf, why, in contempt of authority, theſe ſectaries make temples of

their houſes, why in ſome provinces they have dared to build, without fearing the interpoſition of government?"

"Let it be made known to you, ſire, why unions, reprobated by all laws canonical and civil, are contracted with impunity at their preachings, under the name of marriage; and how it happens that, contrary to the will of the prince, tender infants are every day torn from the miniſters of our holy religion, to be placed under the care of theſe maſters of error, who make them quietly ſuck in its poiſon with their milk?.... who thus emboldens theſe doctors of falſehood, ſacrilegious imitators of our miniſtry, to uſurp the name and rights of *paſtors of the holy church?*..... We conjure you, ſire, delay not a moment to deprive error of the hope of poſſeſſing temples and altars amongſt us: finiſh the work which Lewis the Great (Lewis the Fourteenth) had undertaken, and which Lewis the Well-

beloved (Lewis the Fifteenth) continued. The glory of giving Calviniſm its laſt and mortal blow is reſerved for you...."

The complaint made by the clergy, of the daring boldneſs of Proteſtants in taking children from under the tutelage of Catholic prieſts, was, no doubt, well founded. The Proteſtants, emboldened by the liberality of the times, were ſometimes guilty of this outrage againſt the laws. Under the old *régime*, the offspring of Proteſtants, for ever illegitimate—ſince that holy union, called marriage in other countries, was, for thoſe ſectaries, diſallowed and unknown in France—this miſerable offspring, condemned to infamy by its birth, had no refuge for ſalvation but in the boſom of the church. From this aſylum the Proteſtants were ſometimes guilty of ſtealing children; they were indeed their own; and who, that had any reſpect for the ſacredneſs of religious opinion, or feelings for parental

ſolicitude, however erroneous, but muſt readily have pardoned the violation !

Five years after this epocha, in 1780, the zeal of the clergy led them to repeat their grievances, "It is the duty of our miniſtry, ſire, to fix at firſt the attention of your majeſty on the cruel and deep wounds inflicted on the whole body of revealed truths, by a doctrine hoſtile to every worſhip, and deſtructive of all authority. Alas! this is not the only calamity which has befallen the Gallican church. Hereſy grows every day more haughty and enterpriſing, under the ſhade of lengthened impunity, and is unwearied in rending the boſom of this tender and diſtreſſed mother. During the glorious days of the reign of your auguſt grandfather, a provident adminiſtration had, by means purely repreſſive, checked and even enlightened our ſtrayed brethren. Numberleſs converſions had already excited the ſoothing hope that all the ſheep of

Iſrael would form but one flock, under the guidance of one ſingle ſhepherd; when the ſalutary ſprings of a police combined with ſo much wiſdom became inſenſibly relaxed."

"However ſlight the attention paid to the complaints laid ſucceſſively at the foot of the throne ſince the year 1745, by the aſſemblies of the clergy, the daring ſtrides of the ſectaries preſent ſenſible augmentations and a moſt dreadful progreſſion ..... Formerly, ſire, the ſectaries were rigorouſly excluded, according to the ordonnances, from places, civil employments, &c. ..... Now the infractions are multiplied.—Heretofore the ſectaries held no religious aſſemblies, or ſecretly convoked them in ſolitary and deſert places.... At preſent, the holding of aſſemblies is notorious, and regular. Preachings, eſtabliſhed at the gates of our largeſt towns, inſult the laws by tumultuous ſinging, and noiſy ceremonies. The kingdom is inundated by falſe teachers, who do not heſi-

tate, and without myſtery, to adminiſter the communion to the ſick, and ſpread publications under the form of exhortations and inſtructions, reſpecting the great events of the nation..... They have the audacity, in ſome provinces, even to deliver acts of baptiſm and marriage, dreſſed up with an air of authenticity, in virtue of ſuperior orders given at the beginning of the year 1774" (under the miniſtry of Turgot and Maleſherbes), "which orders are not yet revoked, notwithſtanding the indignation which the late king evinced on this ſubject..... Formerly theſe ſectaries did not permit themſelves to dogmatiſe in public..... Now, every day is marked, as it were, by new irreverences againſt our ceremonies and myſteries..... Here the venerable ſymbol of our redemption has been broken down;.... there horrible blaſphemies againſt the adorable euchariſt have been uttered. Further on, old Catholics have torn themſelves away from the reſtraining yoke of our morality, and

thrown themſelves ſcandalouſly into the arms of a free and independent ſect.... Let us dwell in ſhort on the enterpriſes of the Proteſtants, carried on with new and unexampled audacity; let us examine the numberleſs writings compoſed in their favor, and diſtributed with ſingular profuſion; let us lend an ear to the general cry which reſounds from every part of France; it ſeems as if the church were threatened to ſhare empire with a haughty rival, and that the country will have the pain of ſeeing altar againſt altar erected in its boſom....."

After ſome further detail of the calamities of the Catholic church from the audaciouſneſs of Proteſtantiſm, and echoing the hackneyed obſervation of the immortal biſhop of Meaux (Boſſuet), that "modern incredulity was a deteſtable ſhoot from the fatal ſtock planted in the ſixteenth century by the leaders of the reformation," and which they might have found, on a cloſer examination, to have been rather an offset from the myſterious

and monſtrous trunk of papal abſurdity, thoſe doctors go on to obſerve, that "the diverſity of public worſhip is almoſt always a dreadful ſource of civil diſſenſion. Let us ſuppoſe," ſay they, "that the memorable event conſummated in the laſt century, (the revocation of the edict of Nantes) by a monarch ſo profound in the art of reigning, has really produced the pretended evils alleged by its detractors, by introducing into foreign countries immenſe treaſures, flouriſhing colonies, and the precious knowledge of our arts and manufactures;—how ſhall we repair ſuch loſſes after the lapſe of an hundred years? would it not be exaſperating the wound inſtead of cloſing it, to attempt, by a ſecond operation, to rob us of the great advantages which have conſoled us for the loſs of the former? ſuch we call the unity of religious worſhip, and the ſtability of civil order. What new titles to the benevolence of kings will this aſſemblage of independent men have acquired, who boaſted firmly, in their ſeditious writings,

of having diſcovered that the ſource of royal authority was purely human, whilſt the Catholic doctrine places the cradle of this ſame authority in heaven, and repreſents it as covered with the rays of the Divinity itſelf!"

Were theſe acts of the aſſemblies of the clergy leſs authenticated, it would ſeem incredible, that, at the cloſe of the eighteenth century, and in a civiliſed country like France, there could be found a body of men who would have ventured their reputation, as authors of ſuch a medley of moral and political blaſphemies. It ought, however, to be noticed, in honor of their forbearance, that, while they loudly called for the repreſſion of hereſy, they abjured all appeal to the halter and the ſword, ſince, as they declared, the eccleſiaſtical ſtate was, of all profeſſions, the moſt eſſentially remote from acts of rigor. One mode of converſion, however, they earneſtly recommended, which was that of "encreaſing

the bounties towards new converts, but that no new penſions ſhould be created, except on the ſight of an abjuration in good form, or ſome other equivalent title, with an obligation to preſent every year a certificate of Catholiciſm, ſigned, without expenſe, by the vicar of the pariſh to which the convert ſhould belong." To this mode nothing was objectionable, excepting the premium which fanaticiſm paid for hypocriſy.

Whether the king at this period had not diſcontinued his admiration of Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Diderot, and writers of the like ſort, or whether he had more wiſdom than the collected body of his clergy, we find, in the margin of this remonſtrance, notes which betray a lurking diſpoſition in favor of this hereſy which the prieſthood was ſo anxious to extirpate. In one place the king obſerves, " It ſeems ſingular to ſee complaints againſt the Proteſtants, becauſe they manifeſt their joy when Providence gives me

a ſon, or when I gain a victory over the Engliſh. To what lengths are men carried by their prejudices!" and in another, that "biſhops, well worthy of confidence, have aſſured me that ſurreptitious converſions are contrary to the ſpirit of religion, and that, in order to be praiſeworthy, they ought to be the reſult of a free and enlightened conſcience."

The genuine Catholiciſm of the king at this period (Catholiciſm, in the reſtrained ſenſe of the word) might almoſt be doubted. Among the accuſations brought againſt the Proteſtants in the laſt remonſtrance, was that of a direr hereſy than mere Calviniſm. "Without invoking in this place," ſay they, "public notoriety, or taking advantage of the confeſſions which have eſcaped the indiſcretion of the moſt celebrated Calviniſts, have we not ſeen the ſchool of Geneva preſent, three years ſince, the ſcandalous ſpectacle of a public and uncontroverted theſis, in which it has not bluſhed to call in

queſtion the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, the immutable limit which has always ſeparated ſimple deiſm from true Chriſtianity?" Without calling in queſtion this laſt aſſertion of the clergy in the doctrinal poſition which they laid down, and which diſcovers more ignorance of Chriſtianity than might be allowed to ſo learned a body, the king contents himſelf with ſimply obſerving that the "Proteſtants on their ſide might equally find fault with the theſes of the abbé de Prades." Now theſe theſes of the abbé de Prades were diſquiſitions in favor of pure materialiſm (which, in France, where little is underſtood of religious controverſy, means atheiſm), held at the Sorbonne; of which doctrine one of the ſupporters, at the time, was the archbiſhop of Toulouſe, the chief of the deputation of the clergy in their remonſtrance againſt the Proteſtants. "As long as theſe reproaches ſhall continue," adds the king, "there can be no hope of ſeeing any reconciliation effected. The two religions

ought to edify one another by good actions, and not exaſperate by offenſive accuſations, whether true or falſe." Though it might reaſonably be called in queſtion whether the king was as zealous a catholic as was requiſite for an eldeſt ſon of the church, there can be no doubt that he was at this time more Chriſtian and more truly philoſophic than his clergy,

Six years after this laſt remonſtrance, we find the king abjuring his heterodox opinions, at leaſt reſpecting philoſophy. "Our modern philoſophers," ſays he, "have exalted the bleſſings of their liberty, with the intention only of ſowing with more dexterity in the mind the ſeeds of rebellion. Let us take care: we ſhall have at ſome future day to reproach ourſelves with too much indulgence for philoſophers, and their opinions. I fear leſt they ſhould ſeduce our youth, and prepare many troubles to this generation which protects them. The

remonſtrances of the clergy are in part founded.....The too daring philoſophy of the times has a purpoſe in reſerve."

The event which the prophetic ſoul of the king deprecated, was faſt approaching. It might indeed be ſaid to be already conſummated: and, no doubt, when, ſix years afterwards, in the gloomy priſon of the Temple, he dictated his defence to Maleſherbes, ſome of theſe obſervations, reſpecting the too plenary indulgence granted to philoſophers, glided accroſs his remembrance. It is common with the unhappy to attribute events to cauſes which have no neceſſary connexion with the object. It was not philoſophy enlightening the people, which brought on thoſe fatal cataſtrophes of which the philoſophers themſelves were the victims; but that deplorable ignorance which deſpotiſm loves to foſter as the ſureſt mean of enforcing obedience, and which, when looſened from reſtraint, becomes a direr deſpot in its turn.

But, if the accuſation of corrupting the people by impious and licentious publications be one of the faults from which certain writers can with difficulty exculpate themſelves, what apologies have we not to offer, what applauſes rather have we not to beſtow on thoſe, who by their labors tended to correct this odious and intolerant ſpirit, which we ſee exhibited in the remonſtrances of the clergy!

LETTRE XVI.

A M. DE MALESHERBES.

Paris, ce 28 Octobre, 1786.

L'AUTORITE' a toujours beſoin, mon cher Maleſherbes, d'être environnée de reſpect. Le zèle indiſcret de quelques magiſtrats, les écrits virulens de quelques gens de lettres rélativement aux lettres de cachet, eſt un ſcandale. Les parlemens, qui depuis environ trente ans ſe ſont imaginés que l'autorité royale a beſoin de leur ſanction pour punir légalement, ont pris part dans la querelle, et l'ont rendue plus grave. Je ne crois pas devoir céder, quoique vos ſages avis me ſoint préſens, et que vous vous ſoyez déclaré contre les lettres de cachet. Je n'aurais point fait uſage le premier de l'œuvre du père Joſeph; mais j'ai penſé que, dans le ſiècle où nous ſommes, il ne faut point détruire

la ſeule force répreſſive dont j'ai néceſſairement beſoin dans certaines circonſtances. Je ſais qu'il y a d'étranges abus dans la manière de faire uſage des lettres de cachet : mais quelle eſt la choſe dont on n'abuſe pas ? L'ouvrage de M. de Mirabeau ſur les priſons d'état, que j'ai lu avec attention, renferme des vues profondes. Je regrette vivement que l'auteur, par ſon inconduite, m'empêche de croire à ſes principes philantropiques. Il n'en faut pas moins, mon cher Malesherbes, profiter de tout ce que vous trouverez d'utile dans ſon ouvrage, puis bien ſe convaincre des abus, et remédier promptement au mal. Préſentez-moi donc vos vues régénératrices dans cette partie ; et je me ferai un devoir de les méditer.

LOUIS.

LETTER XVI.

(Tranſlation.)

TO M. DE MALESHERBES,

Paris, October 28, 1786.

AUTHORITY, my dear Maleſherbes, ſtands always in need of being ſurrounded with reſpect; and the indiſcreet zeal of ſome magiſtrates, together with the virulent writings of ſome men of letters reſpecting *lettres de cachet*, is ſcandalous. The parliaments, who during the laſt thirty years have imagined that the royal authority ſtood in need of their ſanction to inflict legal puniſhment, have taken part in the quarrel, and rendered it more ſerious. I do not think I ought to yield, although your wiſe counſels are preſent to my mind, and you have declared yourſelf againſt *lettres de cachet*. I ſhould never

have been the firſt to make uſe of this invention of father Joſeph: but I think, that, in the age in which we live, it would be wrong to annihilate the only repreſſive force at my diſpoſal, and for which I have neceſſarily occaſion in certain circumſtances. Strange abuſes, I know, exiſt in the manner of employing *lettres de cachet:* but what is not ſubject to abuſe? The work of M. Mirabeau on ſtate-priſons contains deep views; and I regret that the mis-conduct of the author prevents me from placing confidence in his philanthropic principles. You muſt nevertheleſs, my dear Malesherbes, avail yourſelf of whatever you find uſeful in this performance, in order to aſcertain the abuſes, and apply a prompt remedy to the evil. Furniſh me therefore with your regenerating ideas on the ſubject, on which I ſhall conſider it as my duty to meditate.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XVIth LETTER.

IN the laſt letter, we find the king warm in his invectives againſt the philoſophers. That letter appears to have been the preliminary of the preſent, where he juſtifies his conduct to M. de Maleſherbes in puniſhing them. It has already been obſerved, that, when M. de Maleſherbes entered into adminiſtration, one of the conditions which he rigidly exacted was the abolition of *lettres de cachet*. The impreſſion made on the king's mind by the eloquent picture which the miniſter drew in his memorial on that ſubject, and the ſtill more perſuaſive arguments which he exhibited in the victims of royal or miniſterial vengeance, had been ſomewhat effaced during the lapſe of ten or twelve years; and, as philoſophy had ſince that period become louder

in its pretenſions, the king prepares to put thoſe inſtruments of terror into execution, and warns M. de Maleſherbes of his intentions.

But it was not a few inſulated men of letters, with whom the king had now to contend. The doctrine, proclaimed by M. de Maleſherbes reſpecting *lettres de cachet*, had penetrated the courts of juſtice; and the parliament was now in inſurrection againſt this arbitrary mode of procedure. The king begins his letter by informing the ex-miniſter, that authority has always need of being ſurrounded with reſpect. If, by "reſpect," the king means the ſentiment which ariſes from love and attachment, he was in the right; but if, as the context too clearly evinces, reſpect was unconditional ſubmiſſion, he could not have proffered a doctrine, at that period, more ſubverſive of authority itſelf.

It is probable that this deteſtable uſage

of deſpotiſm had been ſuggeſted to the king by ſome around him, who fancied that the ſureſt principle of governing was that of force. In the laſt letter, we find clergy active in ſetting before him the example of his predeceſſors in the moſt terrible and impolitic exerciſe of their power. The contradictions and inconſiſtencies, into which the king falls while he is writing this letter to M. de Malesherbes, prove that he was ſpeaking againſt his better feelings. He virtually acknowledges the illegality of the act, in which he confeſſes there were ſtrange abuſes. He admires the obſervations of Mirabeau againſt *lettres de cachet:* they contain profound views, but he regrets the immoral conduct of the ſtateſman—as if there was any neceſſary connexion between the writer, and the important ſubject on which he treats.

But, if the king was ſometimes irreſolute in his perſeverance to do good, it is but juſtice to admit that he always heſi-

tates when about to commit evil. He is ſtruck with the enormity of the act which he thinks of perpetrating; he feels the horror of depriving men of their perſonal liberty without the formalities of juſtice; his mind recoils againſt thoſe deeds of deſpotiſm, which are familiar only to tyrants. He conſults M. de Maleſherbes as his ſtate-confeſſor, and implores his regenerating views on this moſt intereſting of civil concerns, on which he promiſes to meditate. Happy, in ſome degree, the country, where men of independance and probity are permitted to ſtep in between power and its victim, and inſtruct the former that the perſonal ſafety of citizens is the moſt ineſtimable and moſt ſacred of rights: but far happier the ſtate where the law is the equal protector of all, and where ſuch interference becomes unneceſſary, ſince there no ſuch power can exiſt.

LETTRE XVII.

A M. BERTHIER, INTENDANT DE PARIS.

Paris, 28 Octobre, 1788.

VOUS avez préſenté à mon conſeil d'état un projet dicté par la plus pure philantropie. J'aime beaucoup vos moyens pour extirper la mendicité de mes états. Utiliſer les pauvres, mais ne point ajouter à leurs infortunes, élever des lieux de retraite où l'humanité dicte des loix, où la ſageſſe veille, où l'amour du travail ſoit recompenſé, où la jeuneſſe active ſoit toujours occupée, et la vieilleſſe ſouffrante ſoulagée—voilà le motif, le but, de votre projet. La corvée eſt abolie; mais les routes exigent un entretien continuel et diſpendieux. Vos hoſpices de mendians valides ne pourraient-ils pas fournir les ouvriers travailleurs qui ſeraient chargés d'entretenir les

routes, d'en conſtruire de nouvelles ? Je vois, dans ces lieux de retraite, des armées de pionniers ſe former ; parcourir les campagnes : ſtationnés ſur les grandes routes, ils remédieront à l'intempérie des ſaiſons, aux accidens, et entretiendront une libre circulation dans toute la France. Il me paraît cependant que vous vous êtes trop peu occupé des moyens les moins onéreux pour le peuple, de fournir à l'entretien de vos etabliſſemens en faveur de la mendicité. Le peuple n'eſt déjà que trop accablé d'impôts : faut-il le ſurcharger encore, et rendre nul le bienfait de l'abolition de la corvée ? Cherchons le mode le moins diſpendieux, le plus agréable au peuple, et qui puiſſe remplir l'objet que vous vous propoſez—ſoulager les contribuables, utiliſer les pauvres, et pourvoir à l'entretien des routes. Vos connaiſſances, Monſieur, vous fourniront ſans doute de nouveaux moyens ; ſoyez perſuadé que je les appuyerai dans mon conſeil.

Louis.

LETTER XVII.

(*Tranſlation.*)

TO M. BERTHIER, INTENDANT OF PARIS.

Paris, October 28, 1788.

YOU have preſented to my council of ſtate a plan dictated by the pureſt philanthropy; and I approve highly the means you ſuggeſt of extirpating mendicity from my ſtates. To render the poor uſeful without increaſing their misfortunes, to eſtabliſh places of retreat with humane regulations, and under wiſe direction, where the love of labor ſhall be encouraged, where active youth ſhall be occupied, and infirm old age comforted, ſuch are the motives, and ſuch the aim, of your project. The *corvée* is aboliſhed: but the high-ways require continual and expenſive repairs: might not your hoſpitals of mendicants furniſh workmen to mend and conſtruct roads? I ſee whole

armies of pioneers formed in thoſe aſylums, ſcouring the country, and ſtationed on the high-ways, where they will provide againſt accidents, and the ravages of the ſeaſons, and maintain a free circulation throughout all France. You ſeem to me, however, not to have paid ſufficient attention to the means the leaſt burdenſome to the people, of furniſhing what is neceſſary for the ſupport of your eſtabliſhments in favor of mendicity. The people are already too much oppreſſed by taxes: muſt their burdens be ſo increaſed as to render unavailing the benefit of the abolition of the *corvée?* Let us make choice of the mode the leaſt expenſive, the moſt agreeable to the people, and by which the ends you propoſe can be accompliſhed, of diſburdening thoſe who pay taxes, rendering the poor uſeful, and keeping the roads in good repair. Your abilities, ſir, will no doubt furniſh you with new means; and be aſſured I ſhall ſecond them in my council.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XVIIth LETTER.

WHILE the king applauds M. Berthier for his projects of rooting out mendicity from the ſtate, he obſerves to him with great juſtice, that this benefit ought not to be conferred at the expenſe of the public. Under the old *régime*, it was only by making beggars contribute to the common ſtock by their labors, that this ſcourge could be removed from ſociety: but, whether the mode of making them work on the high-roads was the beſt mean of effecting this good intention, is very doubtful. Beggars are ſeldom induſtrious; and the earnings of their labor could ſcarcely have rewarded the time of their overſeers. The revolution has provided in another mode for this once numerous portion of the people, the condition of the poorer claſſes being ſo ame-

liorated as to render mendicity ſcarcely any longer the object of legiſlative attention. This letter ſerves, however, to prove how great an intereſt the king felt in the fate of the loweſt orders of his ſubjects, and that his mind was continually occupied in purpoſes of doing good.

M. Berthier's philanthropy, though praiſed by the king, was far differently underſtood by thoſe who were the objects of his ſolicitude. He was one among the few perſons who were ſacrificed to the fury of the populace in the very firſt days of the revolution. The crime imputed to him was that of monopoliſing corn deſtined for the capital, which act has never been diſproved: but his death was attended by circumſtances of barbarity which would diſgrace the leaſt civiliſed nation,

LETTRE XVIII.

A M. DE LAVOISIER.

15 Mars, 1789.

VOTRE dernière expérience, Monſieur, fixe encore toute mon admiration ; cette découverte prouve que vous avez agrandi la ſphère des connaiſſances utiles. Vos expériences ſur le gaz inflammable prouvent combien vous vous occupez de cette ſcience admirable, qui tous les jours fait de nouveaux progrès.

La reine, et quelques perſonnes que je déſire rendre témoins de votre découverte, ſe réuniront dans mon cabinet demain, à ſept heures du ſoir. Vous me ferez plaiſir de m'apporter le traité des gaz inflammables.

Vous connaiſſez, Monſieur, toute mon eſtime pour vous.

LOUIS.

LETTER XVIII.

(Tranſlation.)

TO M, DE LAVOISIER.

March 15, 1789.

YOUR laſt experiment, ſir, ſtill excites my admiration; this diſcovery proves that you have enlarged the ſphere of human knowledge. Your experiments on inflammable gaz ſhew how much you are occupied by that admirable ſcience, which every day makes new progreſs.

The queen, and ſome perſons to whom I wiſh your experiment to be ſhewn, will meet in my cabinet to-morrow at ſeven in the evening; and you will give me

pleaſure by bringing me the treatiſe on inflammable gaz.

You know, ſir, how much you poſſeſs my eſteem,

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XVIIIth LETTER.

THE experiments, which this celebrated philoſopher is here invited to repeat before the king and his family, form the baſis of the French ſyſtem of chemiſtry. But, although they met with the royal approbation, and ſince with the adherence of almoſt the whole of the chemical world, this ſyſtem yet wants the ſanction of that illuſtrious experimentaliſt who firſt laid the foundation on which this aërial ſuperſtructure is reared.

But, leaving the fate of theſe *gazes* to the impartial inveſtigation of the ſcientific world, who can help deploring that of M. Lavoiſier, and heaving a groan of execration againſt his hideous murderers? He is invited in this letter by the king, to

repeat his experiments before the queen, and perſons of the court; four years afterwards, he requeſted from his executioners the reſpite of a fortnight, to wait the reſult of a ſeries of important experiments he had begun. But his aſſaſſins did not underſtand his appeal: their only ſcience of government was confiſcation; their only experiment, the ſcaffold.

LETTRE XIX.

BILLET ADRESSÉ AU COMTE D'ARTOIS.

13 Juillet, 1789.
11 heures du matin.

J'AVAIS cédé, mon cher frère, à vos ſollicitations, aux répréſentations de quelques ſujets fidèles. Mais j'ai fait d'utiles réflexions. Réſiſter en ce moment, ce ſerait s'expoſer à perdre la monarchie : c'eſt nous perte tous. J'ai retracté les ordres que j'avais donnés ; mes troupes quitteront Paris : j'employerai des moyens plus doux. Ne me parlez plus d'un coup d'autorité, d'un grand acte de pouvoir ; je crois plus prudent de temporiſer, de céder à l'orage, et de tout attendre du tems, du réveil des gens de bien, et de l'amour des Français pour leur roi.

LOUIS.

LETTER XIX.

(*Tranſlation.*)

NOTE ADDRESSED TO THE COUNT D'ARTOIS.

July 13, 1789.
eleven in the morning.

I HAD yielded, my dear brother, to your ſolicitations, and the repreſentations of a few faithful ſubjects: but I have ſince made ſome prudent reflexions. To reſiſt at preſent would be to riſk the loſs of the monarchy, and the ruin of us all. I have therefore countermanded the orders I had given: my troops will retreat from Paris; and I ſhall employ milder meaſures. Talk to me no more of an act of authority, of a great ſtroke of power: I believe it is moſt prudent to temporiſe, to yield to

the ſtorm, and expect every thing from time, from the awakened courage of the good, and the love of Frenchmen for their king.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XIXth LETTER.

THE revolution, which had been ſo long in preparation, was now about to take place. This letter to the count D'Artois was written on the eve of that great day which forms a moſt important epocha in modern hiſtory. For the better underſtanding of this letter, it may be neceſſary to take a very ſlight retroſpect of the part which the king's brother had acted in the momentous events which had occurred during the two preceding months.

When it was diſcovered that the notables, who had been convoked by M. de Calonne, were unwilling or inefficient to remedy the diſorders of the ſtate, M. Necker was recalled to the miniſtry; and the convocation of the ſtates-general was

ordered. The aſſembly of the repreſentatives of the people excited, as was reaſonable, great alarm among the privileged orders: but, as this convocation was indiſpenſable, projects were formed by the parliaments, the nobility, and the clergy, to render their interference of as little weight as poſſible. The mode ſuggeſted was that of following the regulation of the laſt convocation of the ſtates in 1614, when the deputies of the *tiers état* were equal or little ſuperior in number to each of the other two orders. The notables were alſo of this opinion, except that diviſion of which the duke of Rochefoucault was member, and of which the king's eldeſt brother was preſident, who appears to have entertained, in this inſtance, a due regard for the rights of the people. The hoſtile projects of the count D'Artois were not diſſembled at that period: but the will of the miniſter, and the orders of the king, bore down all oppoſition; and it was determined that the number of the deputies of the people

ſhould equal that of the two other orders. The more important queſtion of the mode of voting, whether by orders or by individuals, remained yet undecided.

The reception which the deputies of the *tiers état*, on the opening of the ſtates-general, met with from the nobles, the clergy, and the court, preſented no very flattering hopes of good to be effected by this reunion. The inſtructions, given to the deputies of the people by their conſtituents, were filled with reclamations which excited the alternate rage and contempt of the two other orders. Their expulſion was already mentioned as an affair determined; but, to give this act more ſolemnity, the count D'Artois, at the head of the princes, (among whom, however, muſt be excepted his brother, and the dukes of Penthièvre and Orléans,) preſented to the king a manifeſto levelled againſt the popular deputation. A ſecond manifeſto followed rapidly the former, threatening a general inſurrection

of the nobility, the chief of which threatened inſurrection it was not difficult to gueſs; nor was it more difficult to conjecture that the firſt occaſion would be eagerly ſeiſed to erect their memorials into banners of revolt, as ſoon as a ſufficient number of champions had rallied around them.

The nobles and clergy perſevered in their refuſal to join the *tiers état*; each order verified its powers in ſeparate chambers; nor was any reſpect paid to the frequent invitations given by the deputation of the people to thoſe of the clergy and nobles. Wearied with the conſtancy of thoſe refuſals, the members of the *tiers état* conſtituted themſelves the aſſembly of the commons, declaring themſelves the repreſentatives of the nation, having the right of deliberating alone, and of accompliſhing (if the other orders perſiſted in their refuſal) the regeneration of France. This act of vigor encouraged the minority of the two other orders, who were anxious

for the reunion, to declare themſelves; a meaſure which the majority undertook to prevent, by ſoliciting the king to hold a royal ſitting, in which he ſhould dictate his ſupreme will; which ſitting was deſtined, by the party who provoked it, to be the prelude of the ſpeedy diſſolution of the ſtates.

The deputies, who were enjoined to ſuſpend their meetings on the pretence of preparing their hall for the ceremony, aſſembled in the Tennis-court at Verſailles, where paſſed that memorable oath, pronounced firſt by Bailly, of never ſeparating themſelves till they had effected the reform. The inconvenience of the building leading them to repair to the church of St. Lewis at Verſailles, they were there joined by the minority of the two other orders; on which event, the aſſembly of the commons took the name of the national aſſembly. The 23d of June, the day of the royal ſitting, at length arrived; and the reception which the deputation of the people met with,

indicated every hoſtile intention againſt them. The king informed them, in a tone of no great perſuaſion, that he could effect, without their aid, what remained to be effected; and the reſt of the ceremonial diſcovered that the popular repreſentation had nothing to rely on, but the greatneſs of their object, and the juſtice of their cauſe.

The deputies remaining aſſembled after the royal ſitting had broken up, the maſter of ceremonies of the court ordered them, in the name of the king, to withdraw from the chamber. "*The nation aſſembled*," replied Bailly, "*has no order to receive.*" A new injunction to ſeparate ſoon followed the former; and an anſwer more perſonally indignant, on the part of Mirabeau, confirmed the refuſal of Bailly.

A tumult of the people took place at Verſailles on the report of theſe tranſactions; which tumult was appeaſed by M. Necker. The national aſſembly was

recruited every day by fresh forces from the other orders: but the court was not less occupied than the people. The inhabitants of Paris and Versailles saw troops collecting in their neighbourhood, surrounding them on every side: and, as soon as the forces were completed for the part they had to perform, the count D'Artois, by insulting M. Necker, whom he influenced the king to order once more into exile, began the hostilities he had been so eager to provoke.

The Parisians, menaced by these warlike preparations, and seeing every quarter of the capital filling with foreign troops ready to execute the orders they had received, flew to arms. It was at this critical moment that the king, affrighted by the idea of the instant ruin he was bringing on his country, ordered the retreat of the troops from Paris. This letter to the count D'Artois instructs us who were the principal actors in this perilous enterprise; and the expression

uſed by the king leads us to ſuſpect that he was perfectly aware of the danger, ſince it was no leſs the attack on which he now meditated, than the evil ariſing from reſiſtance. The people indeed had no warlike bands to aid them: but he felt that they had what outweighed all the proud combinations of military force. Againſt a nation armed with enthuſiaſm, with indignation, with hope, what could avail the ſtroke of authority, or the tremendous act of power which the count D'Artois was ſo ſtrenuous to recommend? The king had reaſoned wiſely, and counted the coſt. Once, therefore, amidſt all his acts of inconſtancy and irreſolution, he had ſtumbled happily upon perſeverance; and if he forbore to attempt the exerciſe of power becauſe attack or reſiſtance would have loſt himſelf and the monarchy, ſome credit is due to his courage in having reſiſted the ſolicitation and impetuoſity of thoſe, who, by a ſtroke of deſpotic authority, would have involved both in remedileſs deſtruction.

LETTRE XX.

A M. L'ARCHEVÊQUE D'ARLES.

Ce 26 Août, 1789.

JE ſuis content de la démarche noble, grande, et généreuſe des deux premiers ordres de l'état. Ils ont fait de grands ſacrifices pour la réconciliation générale, pour leur patrie, pour leur roi. Je porte dans mon cœur tout ce qui a été fait dans cette ſéance où tous les privilèges ont été ſacrifiés. Le ſacrifice eſt beau; mais je ne puis que l'admirer: je ne conſentirai jamais à dépouiller mon clergé, ma nobleſſe—à priver l'un des droits acquis à l'égliſe Gallicane par une antique poſſeſſion, par le vœu des fidèles, par les dons des rois mes ayeux: à ſouffrir que l'autre ſoit dépouillé de tout ce qui faiſait ſa gloire, du prix de ſes ſervices, de ſes titres, de ces récompenſes dues aux

vertus civiques et guerrières de la nobleſſe Françaiſe. De belles actions leur avaient mérité des privilèges ; le roi de France doit les leur conſerver. Je ne donnerai point ma ſanction à des décrets qui les dépouilleraient. C'eſt alors que le peuple Français pourrait un jour m'accuſer d'injuſtice ou de faibleſſe. M. l'archevêque, vous vous ſoumettez aux décrets de la Providence ; je crois m'y ſoumettre en ne me livrant point à cet enthouſiaſme qui s'eſt emparé de tous les ordres, mais qui ne fait que gliſſer ſur mon ame. Je ferai tout ce qui dépendra de moi, pour conſerver mon clergé, ma nobleſſe. Si la volonté du peuple ſe prononçait, j'aurais fait mon devoir. Si la force m'obligeait de ſanctionner, alors je céderais ; mais alors il n'y aurait plus en France ni monarchie ni monarque ; et ces deux choſes ne peuvent ſubſiſter qu'aux lieux où le clergé forme un ordre auguſte et reſpecté ; où la nobleſſe jouit de quelque conſidération, et peut ſe placer entre le peuple et le roi. Les momens ſont dif-

ficiles, je le ſais M. l'archevêque ; et c'eſt ici que nous avons beſoin des lumières du ciel. Daignez les ſolliciter ; nous ſerons exaucés.

LOUIS.

LETTER XX.

(*Tranſlation.*)

TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF ARLES.

August 26, 1789.

I AM ſatisfied with the great, noble, and generous proceeding of the two firſt orders of the ſtate; they have made an immenſe ſacrifice towards a general reconciliation, and for their country, and their king. I feel engraven on my heart the tranſactions of that ſitting in which all privileges were renounced. But this ſacrifice, however ſplendid, I can only admire; for I never will conſent to deſpoil my clergy and nobility. I will not deprive the former of the rights which the Gallican church has acquired by antient poſſeſſion, by the voice of the faithful, and by the mu-

nificence of my royal anceſtors; nor will I ſuffer the latter to be ſtripped of all that conſtituted their glory, of the rewards of their ſervices, of thoſe titles, thoſe recompenſes, due to the civil and military virtues of the French nobility. They have merited by great actions thoſe privileges, which it is the duty of the king of France to defend; and I will never give my ſanction to decrees which tend to their annihilation; ſince, were I capable of doing ſo, the French nation might well accuſe me, one day, of injuſtice or weakneſs. You, my lord archbiſhop, ſubmit yourſelf to the decrees of Providence, while I believe that I manifeſt alſo my ſubmiſſion, by not abandoning myſelf to the torrent of enthuſiaſm which hurries on all the different orders of the ſtate, but which only glides lightly over the ſurface of my ſoul. I will do all in my power to preſerve my clergy and my nobility; and, ſhould the will of the people decide againſt it, I ſhall have fulfilled my duty. If ſuperior force obliges me to grant my

ſanction, I muſt yield; but there will then remain in France neither monarchy nor monarch, things which can only exiſt where the clergy form a venerable and auguſt order, and where the nobility enjoy a certain preponderance, and can place themſelves between the king and the people. I know, my lord, that the moment is critical: we ſtand in need of the illumination of heaven; deign to invoke that illumination; and we ſhall be heard from above.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XXth LETTER.

THE events of the fourteenth of July, and the following days, had filled the court with conſternation, and precipitated the flight of ſuch of the princes and chiefs, as had been moſt zealous for the exerciſe of what the king, in the laſt letter, calls "ſtrokes of authority," and "great acts of power." But, although M. Necker had been called from exile, and a general armament throughout the kingdom had followed the firſt inſurrectional movement, no ſecurity was felt that the revolution which had begun would be carried into effect. The expreſſions, *law* and *liberty*, were on every lip: but the government had yielded none of its prerogatives; and thoſe of the privileged orders yet remained untouched. Apprehenſions were even entertained that the enthuſiaſm which had

been excited might wear away, and that thoſe who were intereſted in the continuance of abuſes, might join with the court, now recovering from its aſtoniſhment, to confirm them.

Theſe apprehenſions, ſo far as they reſpected the court, were well founded. Unaccuſtomed to look beyond the limits of its own narrow circle, how could it form any idea of what was meant by liberty, or the will of the people? or conjecture that thoſe terms had any other meaning than ſuch as was ſynonymous with revolt, or rebellion? A conſiderable part of the nobility and clergy appear, however, to have had larger acquaintance with mankind. They felt that the period of momentous changes was now arrived: and perhaps we may be allowed to ſuggeſt that ſome perſonal motives might alſo operate on their minds, ſince they knew, that, if the government ſhould reſume its wonted authority, they would themſelves be the firſt victims of its wrath. But it

would be derogating from the honor of a conſiderable number of individuals in thoſe two orders, not to admit that they were led to this ſurrender of their privileges by ſentiments of patriotiſm and juſtice. On the fourth of Auguſt, three weeks after the day from which dates the epocha of the revolution, the great ſacrifice was conſummated, by an unanimous vote for the ſuppreſſion of all feudal rights. At this memorable ſitting, the clergy and nobility acquieſced in the payment of all taxes whatever; the ſeignorial courts were aboliſhed, and gratuitous juſtice enjoined to be diſtributed throughout the whole kingdom; and a general renunciation and ſuppreſſion of the game-laws was decreed. Amongſt other renunciations, abolitions, and ſurrenders, were thoſe of *francs-fiefs*, *main morte*, *cens*, feudal revenues of every kind, ſuch as warrens, pigeon-houſes, the *droit d'annates* (firſt fruits) to the court of Rome, firſt fruits from vicars to biſhops, vicars' dues, privileges of trades called *jurandes*,

and *maîtrise*, and the ſales of places. No eccleſiaſtic was to enjoy more than one benefice. Citizens of every claſs were eligible to all places civil and military; and the nobility offered an homage to the nation of their titles of firſt barons, and likewiſe of a part of their penſions. The laſt of thoſe reſolutions was that of beſtowing on the king the title of Reſtorer of French Liberty, and the ordering *Te Deum* to be ſung in the preſence of the court.

One abolition yet remained to be made, and which did not paſs with the ſame unanimity as the former. This was the abolition of tithes. Againſt this ſuppreſſion, which was deemed by ſome ſacrilegious, the clergy made conſiderable oppoſition. The votes of the aſſembly were at firſt ſo divided on this important topic, that no abſolute deciſion could be pronounced; but, as the example of renunciations and ſuppreſſions had been ſo ſplendid on the part of the nobility, the

patriotiſm of the clergy gained the aſcendency over their private intereſt; and this tax on national induſtry ſhared the fate of other abuſes. The archbiſhops of Paris and Rouen did the honors of the firſt ſurrender.

It was after ſinging *Te Deum* at the chapel of Verſailles, and after expreſſions of joy and ſatisfaction in an anſwer to the addreſs of the preſident of the national aſſembly, that the king writes this letter to the archbiſhop of Arles. In this letter, as in his ſpeech, the king is ſatisfied with the noble, generous, and ſublime proceedings of the two firſt orders of the ſtate, whom he repreſents as having made great ſacrifices towards a general reconciliation, and to their country, and their king. Theſe ſacrifices for objects ſo important, and which he wears in his heart, meet however only with his admiration. The nobles may ſurrender their *cens*, their *capitaneries*, their *francs fiefs*, *main-morte*, and other feudal appendages: the clergy

their *dues*, their *firſt fruits*, their *ſimoniacal benefices*, and their *tithes*: the king is too much penetrated with thoſe acts of generoſity and ſelf-denial, to permit ſuch abdications of honor, profit, and power, to take place: he reſolves to ſupport the clergy in the antient poſſeſſion of their rights, acquired by the vows of the faithful, and the gifts of his forefathers; nor can he ſuffer the latter to be plundered of every thing which conſtituted its glory, and which are the rewards due to the civic and warlike virtues of the French nobility.

"I will never," ſays the king, "give my ſanction to decrees by which they will be plundered. It is then that the French people may tax me with injuſtice or weakneſs. You, my lord archbiſhop, ſubmit yourſelf to the decrees of Providence: I think I do the ſame by not yielding to that enthuſiaſm which has ſeiſed the different orders, but which glides only acroſs my mind. I will do every thing

that depends on me to preſerve my clergy and nobility." There is an appearance of magnanimity and firmneſs in this declaration of the king, which ill accords with his general character of inconſtancy and indeciſion. He had indeed already virtually ſanctioned theſe decrees of the aſſembly in his anſwer to the preſident; he had accepted the title of Reſtorer of French liberty, and joined in devout thankſgiving to heaven, with his nobility and clergy, to implore the divine bleſſing on theſe ſplendid acts of generoſity and patriotiſm. In this letter to the archbiſhop of Arles, written but a few days after, he takes a tone hoſtile to every ſentiment which he had led the aſſembly to believe he had entertained. He ſmiles at the enthuſiaſm of the orders, againſt which he had had the firmneſs to ſteel his mind, and reſolves to take a tenderer concern in their particular intereſts than they knew how to take themſelves.

The motives which he alleges for this

conduct, and which, under any other circumſtances, would be highly patriotic and laudable, wear here a whimſical appearance. Why does the king reſolve, contrary to the decrees of the aſſembly, contrary to the will of the privileged orders, to withhold his ſanction to the decree, and to uphold thoſe orders in their privileges which they had abandoned? Becauſe, he ſays, the French people might, by his acquieſcence, accuſe him of weakneſs or injuſtice. They muſt have been a very ſingular people indeed, who, after having groaned for ages under the oppreſſion and exactions of the privileged orders, on finding themſelves releaſed, ſhould become at once ſo enamoured of their chains, as to tax their deliverer with injuſtice! We might readily conceive, that, had the people riſen in inſurrection againſt their oppreſſors, and broken their fetters, the privileged orders might tax the king with injuſtice, if he had joined with the *ſerfs*, and protected them in this act of rebellion. We might even admit this accuſation to

be juſt on the part of the nobles, had the bare majority of the aſſemly, the *tiers état* for inſtance, in direct oppoſition to the two other orders, paſſed this decree, and had the king aſſented. But, when the vote of ſurrender was unanimous, when acclamations of joy and gratitude reſounded from every corner of France, that the king ſhould ſtand untouched amidſt the general enthuſiaſm, that he ſhould be the ſingle defender of feudal privileges and eccleſiaſtical rights, abandoned by thoſe moſt intereſted in their preſervation; and that he ſhould plead the will of the people for the perpetuity of thoſe diſtinctions which the people were moſt intereſted in aboliſhing, appears to be a motive of action ſo extraordinary, that, had not the true reaſon been announced in the cloſe of the letter, we muſt have been utterly at a loſs to account for his conduct.

"If ſuperior force obliges me to grant my ſanction," adds the king, "I muſt

yield: but there will then remain in France neither monarchy nor monarch, things which can only exiſt where the clergy form a venerable and auguſt order, and where the nobility enjoy a certain conſideration, and can place themſelves between the king and the people." If, by the terms *monarchy* and *monarch*, the king underſtood (what the words import) the will of one individual in the ſtate, to the excluſion of the reſt—or if he meant the continuation of thoſe abuſes which fortified every privileged order againſt the rights and liberties of the nation in general—he was in the right. After the exploſion which had taken place in July, and the ſurrender made of thoſe abuſes and privileges by the nobility and clergy, it was impoſſible that ſuch a monarchy or monarch ſhould exiſt. This then was the fatal error into which the king had fallen. He had been taught, by thoſe that ſurrounded him, that the revolution which had taken place was only a tranſient effervescence; that, clothed with ſupreme

power as he had always been, and habituated to obey as were the people, he had only to reſiſt the ſhock by temporiſing, and every thing would return to its accuſtomed order. If he could not have prevailed with himſelf to bend or rather elevate his mind to the rank in which the French nation had placed him, that of being the reſtorer of French liberty, and firſt magiſtrate of a free people, it would have been much more ingenuous and noble to have avowed his ſentiments with frankneſs, and have terminated his career with the dignity becoming his character. On the contrary, we behold him making the faireſt profeſſion of attachment to the new order of things, whilſt he was ſecretly reſolved to overthrow it as ſoon as the occaſion ſhould offer; weak in every purpoſe where he ſhould have confidence, and ſtrong and perſevering in every determination which could not fail to bring ruin on himſelf, and perpetuate the diſorders and calamities of his country.

LETTRE XXI.

AU COMTE D'ARTOIS.

7 Septembre, 1789.

MON FRERE,

VOUS vous plaignez ; et votre lettre, où le reſpect et l'amour fraternel guidènt votre plume, contient des reproches que vous croyez fondés. Vous parlez de courage, de réſiſtance aux projets des factieux, de volonté..... Mon frère, vous n'êtes pas roi ! Le ciel, en me plaçant ſur le trône, m'a donné un cœur ſenſible, les ſentimens d'un bon père. Tous les Français ſont mes enfans ; je ſuis le père commun de la grande famille confiée à mes ſoins. L'ingratitude, la haine, arment contre moi ; mais les yeux ſont obſcurcis ; les eſprits ſont égarés ; la tourmente révolutionnaire a troublé toutes les têtes. Le

peuple croit s'intéreſſer à ſa propre cauſe ; et c'eſt moi ſeul que j'aurais pu défendre. Je pourrais donner le ſignal du combat : mais, quel combat horrible ! et quelle victoire plus horrible encore ! Pouvez-vous croire que j'euſſe triomphé, au moment où tous les ordres de l'état ſe réuniſſaient, où tout ce peuple s'armait contre moi, où toute l'armée oubliait ſes ſermens, l'honneur, et ſon roi ? J'aurais donné, il eſt vrai, le ſignal du carnage ; et des milliers de Français auraient été immolés. . . . . Mais vous direz peut-être, le peuple a triomphé ; il vous a prouvé par ſes excès que ſes ſentimens n'étaient pas ſi généreux, qu'il oſait abuſer de la victoire, et poignarder ſon ennemi vaincu.—Ah ! ne comptez-vous pour rien le calme d'une bonne conſcience ? J'ai fait mon devoir ; et, tandis que l'aſſaſſin eſt déchiré par les remords, je puis dire hautement, je ne ſuis pas réſponſable du ſang verſé ; je n'ai point ordonné le meurtre ; j'ai ſauvé des Français ; j'ai ſauvé ma famille,

mes amis, tout mon peuple ; j'ai la conſcience intime d'avoir fait le bien : mes ennemis ont eu recours aux forfaits. Quel eſt celui d'entre nous dont le ſort eſt le plus digne d'envie ? Ceſſez, mon frère, ceſſez de m'accuſer : le tems, les circonſtances, et mille cauſes qu'il ſerait trop long de détailler, ont fait les malheurs de la France. Il eſt trop cruel de me les reprocher. C'eſt ſe joindre alors à mes ennemis, et déchirer ce cœur paternel. Mon frère, je me ſuis ſacrifié pour mon peuple : ſoyez perſuadé que, ce premier devoir rempli, je ſaurai me ſacrifier pour vous et pour les Français qui vous ont ſuivi. Déjà votre éloignement excite des murmures ; déjà les factieux ſe promettent bien de nous accuſer, et de tirer parti de cette démarche, qu'ils appellent en ce moment une fuite, une conſpiration, un attentat. Ces idées ſe propagent ; elles produiront de funeſtes réſultats, ſi la tranquillité n'eſt point rétablie ; ſi votre rappel devient impoſſible ; ſi je néglige l'oc-

caſion favorable de rappeler en France les Français exilés volontairement, et qui doivent s'empreſſer d'obéir au vœu que je me ferai alors un devoir de manifeſter. Adieu, mon frère! n'oubliez pas que je vous aime, et que je m'occupe de vous.

Louis.

LETTER XXI.

(*Tranſlation.*)

TO THE COUNT D'ARTOIS.

September 7, 1789.

MY BROTHER,

YOU complain; and your letter, in which reſpect and fraternal affection appear to guide the pen, contains reproaches which you think well-founded. You talk of courage, of reſiſtance to the projects of factious men, of ſovereign will.....My brother, you are not a king!—Heaven, in placing me on the throne, gave me a feeling heart, and the ſentiments of a good father. All Frenchmen are my children; and I am the common father of the great family confided to my care. Hatred and ingratitude are armed againſt me; but their eyes are

dimmed; their judgement is bewildered; the revolutionary torrent has dizzied every brain! The people believe they maintain the intereſts of their own cauſe; and I ſhould be reduced to the neceſſity of defending myſelf alone. I might indeed give the ſignal of combat: but how horrible a combat! and how more horrible a victory! And can you believe I ſhould have triumphed at the moment when all the orders of the ſtate were united together, when all the people were armed againſt me, and when all the army forgot its oaths, its honor, and its king? I might, no doubt, have given the ſignal of carnage; and thouſands of Frenchmen would have been immolated!———You will tell me perhaps, that the people have triumphed, and have proved, by their exceſſes, that their ſentiments were not ſo generous; that they have dared to abuſe their victory, and ſtab their vanquiſhed foe.—Alas! do you then appreciate as nothing the calm of a good conſcience? I have done my duty; and, while the

aſſaſſin is the prey of remorſe, I can declare loudly, that I am not reſponſible for the blood that is ſhed. I have not commanded murder: I have ſaved the lives of Frenchmen; I have ſaved my family, my friends, my whole people: I have an internal conviction of having acted well, while my enemies have had recourſe to crimes. Which of us is in a ſituation the moſt to be envied? Ceaſe then, my brother, ceaſe to accuſe me: time, circumſtances, and a thouſand cauſes too long for detail, have produced the misfortunes of France. It is too cruel to reproach me with thoſe things: this were to join with my enemies, and break my paternal heart. I have ſacrificed myſelf, brother, for my people; and, this firſt duty being fulfilled, be perſuaded that I ſhall know how to ſacrifice myſelf for you, and the French who have followed you. Your abſence already excites murmurs; already the factious form the purpoſe of accuſing us, and of taking advantage of this meaſure, which they call a flight, a con-

ſpiracy, a crime. Theſe ideas are propagated, and will produce fatal effects, if tranquillity be not re-eſtabliſhed; if your return ſhould become impoſſible, and if I ſhould neglect the favorable opportunity of recalling the French who are voluntary exiles, and who ought to obey with alacrity this deſire, which I ſhall then feel it a duty to manifeſt. Adieu, my brother! do not forget that I love you, and am occupied by your concerns.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XXIst LETTER.

IF any circumſtances may be alleged in extenuation of the error into which the king was led at this period, they are to be found in the paſſions and prejudices of thoſe who were continually goading him on to acts of hoſtility againſt the revolution. Amongſt his greateſt enemies, were thoſe of his own houſehold. No one can read this letter without mingled ſentiments of pity and indignation; pity for the unfortunate prince who had not courage to ſtem this torrent of perverſity, and indignation againſt thoſe, who precipitated him, by their counſels or their reproaches, from one fault to another, till they had completed his ruin.

Amongſt the perſons who were the moſt ſtrenuous for violent meaſures, the

comte D'Artois has been always ſignaliſed as the chief. A fugitive from France after the taking of the Baſtille, and the retreat of the army which had been collected for the diſperſion of the national aſſembly, he talks proudly to his brother, of courage and reſiſtance, mingling reproaches with his complaints. The anſwer of the king to thoſe reproaches is dignified; and we may judge, from the reply, of the nature of the accuſation. "I might have given," ſays the king, "the ſignal of carnage; and thouſands of Frenchmen would have been ſacrificed." The count, in ſafety on the other ſide of the Rhine, was aſſured of victory, had the combat taken place; but the king, who had calculated the chances more calmly, paſſes in review the enemies that were to be ſubdued. The enumeration was not deſpicable; it conſiſted of all the orders of the ſtate, the whole of the people armed, the whole of the army, forgetful of its oaths, and withdrawn from its allegiance: no allies remained to the court but the courtiers and

counſellors who ſurrounded it; and, of theſe, the chiefs, on the firſt exploſion, had ſought their ſafety in flight.

Our intereſt for this unfortunate prince is ſtill further excited, when we ſee with what a glow of ſelf-complacency he looks back on his refuſal to give the ſignal for the commiſſion of theſe horrors, which his brother had the project of ſeeing executed. The king replies to the reproaches for theſe ſentiments of humanity, with meekneſs: "forbear, my brother, forbear your accuſations; the times, circumſtances, and a thouſand other cauſes too long to detail, have occaſioned the misfortunes of France; it is too cruel to reproach me with them." Had the king poſſeſſed a leſs forbearing or benevolent heart, he might have anſwered the accuſations brought againſt him by detailing a few of thoſe thouſand cauſes which had produced this fancied deſolation. Free, here at leaſt, from reproach himſelf, he might have talked of the prodigality, the im-

moralities, and the extravagancies of thoſe who had ſurrounded him, and might have ſketched ſuch portraits as would have made the writer of the letter he was anſwering, ſhrink back from the reſemblance. On the contrary, he remonſtrates with his brother on his abſence, and invites him to return; an invitation which, happily for his country, and, probably, for himſelf, was paſſed by unregarded.

The indiſpoſition of the king againſt the changes which had taken place, continues unabated. He talks of being purſued by ingratitude and hatred; he repreſents the whole of France as blinded, led aſtray, and toſſed about by the revolutionary tempeſt, and aſſures his brother that he has ſacrificed himſelf for his people. Of theſe ſacrifices for the people it is difficult to diſcover the amount: if the king's own letters furniſh any proof, we ſhould be led to think the contrary. The king at this period was in the habit of being deceived, and of deceiving himſelf;

but there is one ſacrifice which ought not to be forgotten, that of the vile and vindictive paſſions of thoſe around him, who were eager to kindle the conflagration of civil war throughout the kingdom, which, though it would neceſſarily have ended in their own deſtruction, would, at the ſame time, have overwhelmed the country with general deſolation.

LETTRE XXII.

A M. LE COMTE D'ESTAING.

Verſailles, 5 Octobre, 1789 :
7 heures du ſoir.

VOUS voulez, mon couſin, que je me prononce dans les circonſtances critiques où je me trouve, et que je prenne un parti violent, que j'emploie une légitime défence, ou que je m'éloigne de Verſailles. Quelle que ſoit l'audace de mes ennemis, ils ne réuſſiront pas : le Français eſt incapable d'un régicide. C'eſt en vain qu'on verſe l'or à pleines mains, que le crime et l'ambition s'agitent : j'oſe croire que le danger n'eſt pas auſſi preſſant que mes amis ſe le perſuadent. La fuite me perdrait totalement ; et la guerre civile en ſerait le funeſte réſultat. Me défendre—il faudrait verſer le ſang des Français : mon cœur ne peut ſe fa-

miliariſer avec cette affreuſe idée. Agiſſons avec prudence : ſi je ſuccombe, du moins je n'aurai nul reproche à me faire. Je viens de voir quelques membres de l'aſſemblée : je ſuis ſatisfait : j'oſe attendre qu'il s'opérera une heureuſe révolution dans les eſprits. Dieu veuille, mon couſin, que la tranquillité publique ſoit rétablie ! Mais point d'agreſſion, point de mouvement qui puiſſe laiſſer croire que je ſonge à me venger, même à me défendre.

LOUIS.

LETTER XXII.

(Translation.)

TO THE COUNT D'ESTAING.

Verſailles, October 5, 1789,
ſeven in the evening.

YOU wiſh, my couſin, that I ſhould declare myſelf in the preſent critical circumſtances, and have recourſe to violent meaſures; that I ſhould make uſe of juſt means of defence, or withdraw from Verſailles. Whatever be the audacity of my enemies, they will not ſucceed: the French are incapable of regicide. It is in vain that heaps of gold are diſtributed, and that guilt and ambition are indefatigable in their attempts: I venture to believe that the danger is not ſo imminent as my friends imagine. Flight would be my utter ruin; and civil war its

calamitous conſequence. Were I to defend myſelf, the blood of Frenchmen would be ſhed; and my heart cannot familiariſe itſelf with that hideous idea. Let us act with prudence; and I feel that I ſhall at leaſt be free from ſelf-reproach. I have juſt ſeen ſome members of the aſſembly, and am ſatisfied: I dare flatter myſelf that a happy revolution will take place in men's minds. Heaven grant, my couſin, that public tranquillity may be reſtored! But let there be no aggreſſion, no commotion, which can give the idea that I think of avenging or even of defending myſelf.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XXIId LETTER.

THIS letter, addreſſed to the count D'Eſtaing, relates to the events of the fifth and ſixth of October. The count was, at that epocha, commander in chief of the national militia of Verſailles, and, at the inſtant the letter was written, headed the body-guards of the king, the regiment of Flanders, the dragoons, and the Swiſs guards. Thoſe troops were drawn up before the palace, fronting the great avenue, waiting the approach of the national guard of Paris, who, with M. de la Fayette at their head, were marching to Verſailles.

The events of the firſt days of October form a very important æra in the hiſtory of the revolution, have called forth the eloquence of orators and writers of various

deſcriptions, have occupied the national councils, and perplexed courts of juſtice. Notwithſtanding the myſtery in which thoſe tranſactions were enveloped, there now appears little doubt that they were the reſult of a double conſpiracy, of the court on the one hand, to regain the power it had loſt, and of a party concealing its ſelfiſh deſigns under the maſk of patriotiſm, puſhing on the diſcontented to acts of violence, and making them the inſtruments of its criminal deſigns. Of this party the late duke of Orléans has been more than ſuſpected of being the chief; and whoever will take the trouble of looking into the circumſtantial details of thoſe events, as recorded at the time, will find no difficulty in attributing to this inglorious demagogue the diſhonorable motives which produced this event.

Of this conſpiracy againſt his authority, clipped as it had been by the revolution, and even againſt his life, the king appears to have felt little apprehenſion. "What-

ever be the audacity of my enemies," ſays he, "they will not ſucceed: the French are incapable of regicide. It is in vain that heaps of gold are diſtributed, and that guilt and ambition are indefatigable in their attempts." Having this perſuaſion, it ſeems ſingular that the king ſhould not have been more cautious in avoiding every pretext for the accompliſhment of thoſe criminal deſigns. Nothing ſurely was better fitted to give a color of juſtification to this new inſurrection, than the ſcenes which were then paſſing in the palace of Verſailles, where the hatred of the new order of things was ſo undiſſembled, that acts the moſt hoſtile and inſulting to the nation were permitted publicly to take place, and were regarded, by thoſe whoſe intereſt it was to check thoſe imprudent emotions, with more than approbation.

The delay of the king to ſanction the decrees of the aſſembly forming the baſis of the new conſtitution, and the real or

fictitious ſcarcity of bread in the capital, were the pretexts for this attack on royal prerogative; of which attack, whatever was ill-intended or malignant, was parried by the prudence of the commander of Paris, M. de la Fayette; who, compelled by the civil power to head the troops in this expedition, counteracted, or at leaſt neutraliſed, the ſiniſter purpoſes of its original projectors. Both parties in this conſpiracy failed in their deſign. The court felt once more, how unavailing were all its efforts to bring about a counter-revolution; and the enemies, of whom the king ſpeaks, diſcovered that the inſtruments they had bribed or ſeduced into inſurrection, were indocile to the perpetration of crimes to which it is probable they were inſtigated.

Whatever may have been the real ſtate of the caſe—whether the conſpiracy of the court againſt the revolution, or the conſpiracy of the faction againſt the court, were the cauſes of this popular move-

ment—the diſpoſition and conduct of the king, under theſe trying circumſtances, are worthy of the higheſt praiſe. If we blame him at times for his weakneſs, it is probable that we ſhould blame him leſs, if we knew all the wrong counſels which he reſiſted. The count d'Eſtaing, it appears from the king's anſwer, had urged him to fight, or fly. At the queen's trial, when the count was brought to witneſs againſt her, it was proved that he had procured from the municipality of Verſailles, then in the intereſt of the court, an order on the fifth of October, to employ every means of conciliation with the Pariſians; and, in caſe of not ſucceeding, to repel force by force. The laſt article of theſe written inſtructions ordered him to neglect nothing in order to bring back the king to Verſailles as ſoon as poſſible.

The queen had alſo been urged to ſecure herſelf by flight, as the perſon againſt whom the popular indignation was moſt

excited. The depoſition of the count, on the queen's trial before the revolutionary tribunal, deſerves remembrance. "I heard," ſaid he, "the counſellors of the court tell the priſoner," (that is the queen,) "that the people of Paris were coming to maſſacre her, and that ſhe ought to depart; to which ſhe replied with great dignity, If the Pariſians come here to aſſaſſinate me, it is at the feet of my huſband they ſhall find me; but I will never fly."

It is probable that theſe arrangements with the municipality were taken by the count without the king's conſent; ſince, when, on the evening of the fifth of October, the count preſented them to the king, he received the refuſal of compliance contained in this letter. The wiſdom of the king is here finely contraſted with the folly of his adviſers, who ought to have recollected the events which had paſſed only three months before, and to have felt how unavailing would have

been the reſiſtance of a few companies of ſoldiers, againſt an armed nation; and how little confidence could be repoſed in the fidelity of troops who had already broken their oaths according to the king's accuſation, and who, on the preſent occaſion, were diſpoſed to a ſimilar relaxation. The king felt too much the danger of his poſition, to act up to the courage or raſhneſs of his defenders. The anſwer, therefore, which he returned to the decrees of the municipality and the inſtances of the count, is marked with traits of humanity which do no leſs honor to his heart, than the reſolution he had taken, of abiding the conſequences at Verſailles, does credit to his judgement.

It has been already mentioned, that, previous to the arrival of the Pariſians at Verſailles, the king, while he accepted certain decrees of the aſſembly, had refuſed or deferred his ſanction to ſuch as formed the baſis of that liberty of which he had been proclaimed the reſtorer. This

refuſal (for ſo the delay was conſtrued by the aſſembly) had excited the warmeſt animadverſions: and, after a long diſcuſſion, in which it was repreſented that the aſſembly ought not one inſtant to defer requiring of the king a pure and ſimple acceptance of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, as well as of the conſtitutional articles already decreed, the preſident, accompanied by a deputation, was ordered to preſent himſelf before the king, and to beſeech him to give his ſanction to thoſe decrees.

It was at the end of this diſcuſſion that the Pariſians appeared at the bar of the aſſembly. Whatever change may have been produced in the diſpoſitions of the king by the remonſtrances and firmneſs of the aſſembly, the terror excited by the inſurrection was no doubt an additional motive to lead him to give his ſanction to thoſe immortal principles which formed the baſis of French liberty. He alſo conſented at the ſame time to change his

residence from Verſailles to Paris, where the enemies of the revolution, being more nearly obſerved, would have fewer opportunities, and leſs means, of combining againſt its cauſe. Meanwhile the repreſentatives of the nation, thus relieved from a part of their inquietudes, had leiſure to give form and ſubſtance to the great principles of freedom, and embody them as it were into maxims of national faith.

LETTRE XXIII.

A M. DE BRISSAC.

Du 28 Octobre, 1789.

JUSTE appréciateur, Monſieur, du zèle chevaleresque qui a dirigé toute votre conduite depuis l'époque de nos malheurs, je trouve une ſatisfaction infinie à vous témoigner perſonnellement les ſentimens de gratitude que la reine et moi vous devons pour ce que votre loyauté vous a dicté dans la journée d'hier. J'ai appris à mon réveil ce matin que vous étiez malade : j'ai cru ne pouvoir mieux vous prouver le vif intérêt que nous prenons à votre perſonne, qu'en vous aſſurant de l'immuable eſtime que j'aurai toute ma vie pour un auſſi bon Français, et un ſujet auſſi fidèle que vous.

LOUIS.

LETTER XXIII.

(Tranſlation.)

TO M. DE BRISSAC.

October 28, 1789.

JUSTLY appreciating, ſir, the romantic zeal which has directed all your conduct ſince the epocha of my misfortunes, I feel an infinite ſatisfaction in teſtifying perſonally the ſentiments of gratitude which the queen and myſelf owe to you, for all that your loyalty dictated during the events of yeſterday. When I roſe this morning, I was informed that you were ill; and I thought I could not better prove the lively intereſt we take in you, than by aſſuring you of the unalterable eſteem which I ſhall feel all my life for ſo good a Frenchman, and ſo faithful a ſubject.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XXIIId LETTER.

M. DE BRISSAC, whoſe chevalereſque zeal is here ſo much the theme of eulogium, was among the moſt active in prompting the king to reſiſtance againſt the revolution, by the propoſal of meaſures the moſt extravagant, and the leaſt likely to be crowned with ſucceſs. He was the commander in chief of the king's new guards, and, by the imprudent exerciſe which he made of this ardor in the royal cauſe, was the principal perſonage who contributed afterwards to their ſuppreſſion. His zeal was ſo much the more fatal to the king, as the reſiſtance to which he prompted him againſt the decrees of the aſſembly with reſpect to this guard, was not amongſt the leaſt of the cauſes which brought on the events of the tenth of Auguſt.

LETTRE XXIV.

A M. DE BAUMENT, AGENT A LONDRES.

Paris, ce 29 Novembre, 1789.

VOTRE dernière lettre ne détermine rien, et parle peu de l'opération dont vous êtes chargé. Quelle insouciance, ou quelle inertie! Vous savez que j'ai besoin de la somme que vous êtes chargé de négocier; et vous vous laissez prévenir. Vous ne voyez pas les banquiers accepteurs, et vous laissez tranquillement s'effectuer l'emprunt du duc d'Orléans. Cependant les momens étaient si précieux, et l'argent si nécessaire. Je sais bien que le ministre de l'intérieur, avec sa contre-police, ne fait pas grandes choses, et me coûte beaucoup. Il connaît toute ma répugnance à m'endetter, et combien peu je prise les moyens de séduction. Il veut singer le duc d'Orléans,

qui ſe ruine pour faire le mal, et ſe venger de quelque platte chanſon, ou de quelque mépris, dont, en mon particulier, je ſais qu'il s'eſt bien rendu digne. Un de mes agens au Palais Royal m'a fait connaître, non ſeulement la deſtination des ſommes qu'il a empruntées, mais encore l'emploi de ces ſommes. Il eſt certain que, l'eſcompte prélevé, et les *boni* des entremetteurs ſouſtraits, il a été diſtribué quinze cens mille livres aux principaux partiſans du duc d'Orléans. Mirabeau a eu pour ſa part quatre-vingt mille livres, qui ont été comptés chez Latouche, et portés, dans trois fiacres, rue Chauſſée d'Antin*. J'ai la liſte de ceux des députés qui ont reçu..... On a diſtribué ſoixante mille livres dans le Fauxbourg St. Antoine, et chez quelques partiſans du duc. On s'eſt empreſſé de faire payer l'arriéré à quelques

* A cette copie était attachée, avec une épingle, une liſte, contenant les noms de ceux qui avaient reçu des ſommes provenans de l'emprunt fait par le duc d'Orléans à Londres, en 1789

gens audacieux, et connus par leur esprit d'intrigue et leurs vues ambitieuses. On a porté sur cette liste le nom d'un certain *Marat*, celui de *Danton*, les noms de quelques Génévois réfugiés en France, de ce parti qui à Génève se disait patriote ; enfin de quelques hommes obscurs, mais très dangereux.

Voilà bien des méchans réunis contre moi, je le sens bien. Il faut, comme vous le dites, user de leur tactique, et m'attacher des hommes entreprenans, ou plutôt récompenser le zèle de quelques uns de mes fidèles sujets. C'est avec plaisir que je ferai distribuer l'argent que j'ai promis. Il ne sera point employé pour commettre le crime : mais il servira à surveiller mes ennemis, et à déjouer leurs projets. Hâtez-vous d'exécuter mes ordres ; et que l'emprunt soit rempli. Profitez de la bonne intention dehors.

LOUIS.

LETTER XXIV.

(Translation.)

TO M. DE BAUMENT, AGENT AT LONDON.

November 29, 1789.

YOUR laſt letter terminates nothing, and ſpeaks little of the operation with which you are charged. What indifference, or what apathy! You know I ſtand in need of the ſum which you were directed to negotiate; and you ſuffer it to be obtained by others. You have not ſeen the bankers; and you allow the loan of the duke of Orléans to be quietly effected, although the moments were ſo precious, and money ſo neceſſary. I know well that the miniſter of the interior, with his counter-police, achieves but little, and coſts me a great deal. He knows all my repugnance to incurring debt, and how ſmall a value I place on

the means of ſeduction. He wiſhes to ape the duke of Orléans, who ruins himſelf to do harm, and avenge himſelf of ſome ſilly ſongs, or ſome marks of contempt, which, in my opinion, he well deſerved.

One of my agents at the Palais Royal has made known to me, not only the deſtination of the ſums he has borrowed, but the actual employment of thoſe ſums; and it is certain, that, the diſcount deducted, together with the profits of the brokers, fifteen hundred thouſand livres have been diſtributed among the principal partiſans of the duke of Orléans. Mirabeau has had eighty thouſand livres for his ſhare, which were counted down at Latouche's, and carried in three hackney coaches to the rue Chauſſée d'Antin*.

* A paper was faſtened, with a pin, to this letter, containing the liſts of the names of thoſe who had received ſums ariſing from the loan made by the duke of Orleans at London, in 1789.

I have the liſt of the deputies who have received money. Sixty thouſand livres were diſtributed in the Fauxbourg St. Antoine, and to ſome partiſans of the duke. They have been eager to pay off the arrears to ſome daring men, known by their intriguing ſpirit, and their ambitious views. The name of a certain Marat is inſcribed on the liſt; that alſo of Danton, and of ſome Genevan refugees in France, of that party which calls itſelf patriotic; upon the whole, thoſe of ſome obſcure, but very dangerous individuals.

Thus, a number of wicked perſons are united againſt me. I am perſuaded that I muſt, as you tell me, employ their tactics, and attach ſome enterpriſing men to my intereſts, or rather recompenſe the zeal of ſome of my faithful ſubjects. I ſhall diſtribute with pleaſure the money I have promiſed, which ſhall be employed, not for the commiſſion of crimes, but ſhall ſerve to watch over my enemies,

and counteract their projects. Haſten to execute my orders; fill up the loan; and avail yourſelf of the good diſpoſitions abroad.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XXIVth LETTER.

THIS letter furniſhes a melancholy proof of the falſe meaſures into which the king was ſometimes betrayed. We ſee him here deſcending to the employment of thoſe diſavowed and undignified means, which he condemns, with ſo much juſtice, in the duke of Orléans. We ſee him countenancing his miniſter for home-affairs in the uſe of a counter-police, which effects but little, and coſts much; and, while he blames this miniſter for aping the duke of Orléans, he accuſes his agents in London of negligence or inactivity, in not furniſhing him with the means of following the example he condemns. This M. de Baument, it appears, was alſo one of the counſellors, as well as money-brokers, of this unfortunate prince. "I muſt, as you ſay," quoting this coun-

ſellor, " make uſe of their tactics," (the tactics of his enemies,) " and attach enterpriſing men to my ſervice." The king indeed declares that this money ſhould not be employed for the purpoſes of crime; and it is certain that he was himſelf incapable of thus miſapplying it: but what aſſurance had he that theſe enterpriſing men would be the faithful mandataries of his benevolent purpoſes? and had he no miſgivings that their undertakings, aided by the ſupplies expected from London, would lead him on to ſome other criſis of the revolution, from which he might find more difficulty in eſcaping, than the former?

This ſyſtem of corruption, however well it might apply to the diſpoſition and views of the duke of Orléans, was ſurely very unworthy of Lewis the Sixteenth. It had alſo this evil tendency, that, while the king thus deluded himſelf with the perſuaſion that he could watch his enemies, and diſconcert their projects, he in-

dulged a blameable ſpirit of reſiſtance againſt the national aſſembly. Had he, on the contrary, ſincerely and frankly co-operated in the views of the prudent majority who had at this period the aſcendency, he would have done more towards watching his enemies, and diſconcerting their projects, than could have been achieved with all the money which loans and bankers could procure.

As an encouragement to exertion and activity, the king informs M. de Baument, not only that the duke of Orléans had ſucceeded in borrowing fifteen hundred thouſand livres in London, which was doubtful, but alſo in what manner it had been diſtributed. Mirabeau, according to this account, received eighty thouſand livres, which was conveyed to him in three hackney coaches. Againſt this Lacedæmonian mode of transfer there is nothing to object, but its improbability. Mirabeau might indeed have received ſums from the duke of Orléans; he is

accuſed alſo of having received ſums from Lewis the Sixteenth. With reſpect to Mirabeau, therefore, the king and his couſin were on equal terms. But Mirabeau, it ſeems, was not the only beneficiary of the duke of Orléans's bounty. The king aſſures his agent that he has a liſt of the members of the aſſembly who partook of this ſame loan.

This liſt is annexed to the letter; and, though it was the intention of the French editor, on delivering this correſpondence, that it ſhould be publiſhed to the world, yet I think myſelf juſtified in imitating the prudence of the king on this occaſion, who mentions to his correſpondent the names only of two perſons, whom it were impoſſible, from their flagitiouſneſs, to calumniate; unwilling, probably, in circumſtances where he might be deceived, to injure the reputation of innocent men. To this deciſion I am the more inclined, as the king, in tranſcribing their names, does not pretend to have any poſitive

assurances of the corruption which is charged upon them. The report of this delinquency is made him by a spy. "One of my agents at the Palais Royal has informed me, not only of the destination of the sums which he" (the duke of Orléans) "has borrowed, but also of the manner in which they have been employed." The king, as well as his minister, had his counterpolice, and, like a sagacious general, kept his soldiers in the enemies' camp. It was the duty of those spies to gain information of the motions of the duke of Orléans: and, as those who are employed in such occupations, are usually persons who possess no very nice feelings with respect to honor, and who have sworn no inviolable attachment to truth, it is probable that the information transmitted was often that which was most favorable, instead of that which was most exact. The agent was interested in communicating such details as should enhance the value of his services, fearless of contradiction, since the truth or falsehood

of what he ſtated could not, by its nature, run the riſk of inveſtigation.

But the moſt direct and formal refutation of the falſehood which this ſpy impoſed on his employer, would be the publication of the names contained in the liſt. There are indeed ſome, whom it would be no breach of candor to ſuſpect of earning and receiving thoſe wages of iniquity; and againſt whom it had been well for their country if no crimes of greater magnitude could have been charged; crimes, from the mention of which we ſtart back with horror. Names alſo of doubtful reputation are here inſcribed. But recorded on this liſt we find perſons whoſe purity of conduct even the voice of ſlander never dared to impeach; men, whoſe principles, firm amidſt the tremendous ſhock of the revolution, have braved corruption, as well as tyranny, of every kind, and under every form; and ſome of whom ſealed their teſtimony to the cauſe of liberty with their blood.

All, therefore, that this letter proves, is, that the king employed agents to procure money, in order to reward *enterprising men*; that his minister of foreign affairs had a police in opposition to that of the avowed public authority, and that he himself employed spies in the palace of the duke of Orléans. Thus was Lewis the Sixteenth led on by artful and designing persons, to the imitation of a conduct, which his sense of honor as a man, and his sentiment of dignity as a prince, forced him to mark, in another, not only with disapprobation, but to stigmatise with abhorrence.

LETTRE XXV.

A SON ALTESSE EMINÉNTISSIME EMANUEL DE ROHAN, GRAND MAITRE DE L'ORDRE DE MALTHE.

Paris, ce 18 Novembre, 1789.

MON COUSIN,

DANS des ſiècles pieux, la France généreuſe avait comblé de ſes bienfaits l'ordre de St. Jean de Jeruſalem. Le monde Chrétien en reconnut l'utilité : il lui plut encore d'accorder à vos chevaliers tous les privilèges dont ils ont conſervé les prérogatives juſqu'à préſent. Les rois mes ayeux ſanctionnèrent la volonté des fondateurs, et le droit des titulaires. Des circonſtances impérieuſes ont amené un changement dans l'ordre politique de la France. Les chevaliers de la langue Françaiſe imiteront ſans doute l'exemple que je leur donne. Ce n'eſt pas lorſque

tous les ordres de l'état ſont des ſacrifices, qu'ils reſteront en arrière. Je laiſſe à votre ſageſſe, mon couſin, de prendre les meſures qui peuvent coïncider avec les travaux de l'aſſemblée nationale. Sur ce, je prie Dieu, mon couſin, qu'il vous ait en ſa ſainte garde.

Louis.

LETTER XXV.

(Translation.)

TO HIS MOST EMINENT HIGHNESS, EMANUEL DE ROHAN, GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA.

Paris, November 18, 1789.

My Cousin,

IN pious ages, the generosity of France heaped benefits on the order of St. John of Jerusalem. The Christian world felt the utility of this order, and was pleased to grant also to your knights the privileges of which they preserve the prerogatives to this day. The kings, my ancestors, sanctioned the will of the founders, and the rights of the titularies. Imperious circumstances have produced a change in the political state of France; and the knights of the French tongue will

no doubt imitate the example which I have given them. Whilſt every order of the ſtate are making ſacrifices, they will not ſtand aloof. To your wiſdom, my couſin, I leave the choice of ſuch meaſures as ſhall coincide with the labors of the national aſſembly; and ſo I pray God, my couſin, to take you under his holy protection.

LEWIS.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE XXVth LETTER.

IN the revolutionary reviſion of privileges which took place at this period, the monaſtical-military order of Malta had not eſcaped the ſearching eye of the aſſembly. The property belonging to this order was comprehended in the decree which declared all eccleſiaſtical property to be national; and the knights of St. John who belonged to the French tongue, became the penſioners of the ſtate.

Although this order had not the honor and the conſolation of making the ſurrender of their privileges, like the great orders of the ſtate in France, yet there were ſome amongſt them, who had diſpoſitions equally generous and patriotic. In a memorial which had been compiled at Malta, about this period, by the chevalier

de Ranſijat, who held at the time one of the higheſt offices in the iſland, he obſerves, that "the abuſes which had crept into the order were ſo numerous and ſo ſtriking, that every member who compoſed it, appeared alike to feel the neceſſity of reforming them." On queſtioning the chevalier reſpecting thoſe feelings among his brother-knights, it appeared, however, that ſuch ſentiments were pretty much confined to himſelf. That part of his memorial which treats of the ſlavery of the Malteſe, and the means of remedy, do him honor, both as a man and a citizen.

The king's letter to the grand-maſter is written in a ſtyle not only of urbanity, but of affection. The king brings before his recollection the ſhades of paſt ages, which he decorates with the epithet of pious, and which the innovators of the preſent day accuſtom themſelves to ſtigmatiſe with the opprobrious denominations of dark and ſuperſtitious. He conſoles his

couſin with the remembrance of the former obligations of the Chriſtian world to his order, which the Chriſtian world at preſent has the ingratitude to diſavow. The devotedneſs of the royal anceſtry of France to the knights of Malta is likewiſe introduced, which renders more melancholy the contraſt of the next ſentence of the letter, informing the duke that imperious circumſtances had neceſſitated a change in the political order of France.

In the letter which the king wrote to the archbiſhop of Arles after the decrees of the fourth of Auguſt, recapitulating the ſervices rendered by the great orders of the ſtate, and the honor and rewards beſtowed on them, he declares his firm reſolution to maintain them in the enjoyment of their privileges, in ſpite of the renunciation which they themſelves had made. As this generoſity on the part of the king met at the time with no encouragement from thoſe who were moſt

intereſted in exciting it, he prudently forbears from making ſimilar declarations to the order of Malta. He pleads, on the contrary, his own example, and that of the great orders of the ſtate, holding up the ſacrifices made in France as objects of imitation. The knights were compelled to yield to ſuperior orders, and to comply with the decrees of the aſſembly. But neither the ſacrifices made by the king, the nobility, or the clergy, had much influence on their minds. They remained true to their allegiance amidſt the general defection; and, could the expreſſion of their ſentiments have reached the throne, their anſwer to this miſſive would have been the parody of the king's letter to the archbiſhop of Arles, containing the offer of preſerving him in the enjoyment of his monarchical prerogatives, in ſpite of himſelf.

END OF VOL. I.

T. Davison,
White-Friars.

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